

死にやすい
公爵令嬢

エーリカ・
アウレリア
と
来航者の
遺跡



瀬尾照

TERASU SENOO



ILLUST

六七質

MUNASHICHI

Duke's Daughter who is Liable to Die and the Seven Nobles

– Shini Yasui Kōshaku Reijō to Nana-ri no Kikōshi –

- Volume 1 -

Erica Aurelia and the Ruins of Visitor

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[Starry Night Translation]

- STORY -

On one spring evening when I was eight years old,
I realized that I was Erica, Duke of Aurelia's daughter.

Huh, did I get reincarnated into a fantasy world?

Moreover, it was the romance-fantasy girl game that had the reputation
as being bloody, [Liber Monstrorum ~Phantom Beasts and the Winter
Princess~]

The face that was reflected in the mirror was the villainess character of
that game.

After repeatedly harassing many characters, including the heroine,
she would surely die at the beginning in a bizarre incident.
She was a villain who deserved to get the consequences!

—I absolutely didn't want a destiny like that, though?

No, for me who had remembered the memory of my previous life,
there would be no such a thing.

In my previous life, I was harassed by an angry Yandere man who said
'I am absolutely in love with you' and accused me many things.

My cause of death was also from being stabbed by another Yandere man
who I only had talked with a few times...

If it was the proud villainess Erica, would the misunderstandings like
with the previous life's Yandere men still happen...?

In that case, it would be fine as long as I dealt with the death flags that I had raised.

All right! First of all, before the bizarre incident began at the Magic Academy, I would strike down the death flags accordingly!!

It seemed that I was about to die.

Eeh, how did this happen—!?

Prologue

Erica Aurelia, the Villainous Lady

“How did this happen...?”

I, Erica, the Duke of Aurelia’s daughter, couldn’t move when I saw myself in the mirror.

Dark golden hair like honey was gently rolled elegantly.

The skin was white like milk, and the cheeks were rosy.

Although it was still the young face of an 8-years-old, she had high eyebrows and emerald eyes that looked arrogant.

—Is that, me?

Wrong! That wasn’t me! That was—

I began to feel a sense of incompatibility with the hair color, skin color, and eye color.

Above all, this characteristically vertical roll....!!

This was the villainous lady of the romance-fantasy girl game[Liber Monstrorum ~Phantom Beasts and the Winter Princess~] Erica Aurelia!¹

I was seized by a sensation that made my feet wobbly, and I leaned on the mirror to stabilize myself.

One by one, the memories of my past life was gushing forth like a spring, and I felt sick.

Does this mean that I was reincarnated and awakened the memory of my previous life?

I thought that was absurd, but just now, the recollection about my life as Erica said that this was the world of [Liber Monstrorum ~Phantom Beasts and the Winter Princess~]

And that was why I had nothing but bad feelings no matter how good my face was now.
More than that, it was *that* villainous lady, Erica Aurelia.

I knew that Erica was bullying the heroine who entered the magic academy, and she was the first person to die as the time for the bizarre incident started.

If I grew up like this, when the drama for the heroine and her chosen capture target reached the climax and the murder case began, I would die!

I *really* wanted to avoid that.

Being suddenly attacked and died again, that would be too regrettable.

—*Again?*

And the memory that I didn't want to remember rushed into my head.

It seemed to be the memory of my last moment in the previous life.

I was shocked because I could see shiny things.

I felt a burning heat in the side of my flank and when I stretched out my hand there, it was bright red with blood.

I escaped to ask someone for help, but I was stabbed many times as I shouted—.

I see, after that, I was dead...

He was my colleague, I thought he was a man who never talked much.

Suddenly, on my way back from work, he stabbed me many times while saying '*You betrayed me*', but why?

The only contact with him that I could remember was lending him a retractable umbrella when it began to rain, but what was his problem?

Or was it *that*?

There was a similar incident during high school.

I belonged to the Geography Club, and everyone in the club (which consisted of boys except for me) said '*I fall in love with you*' and in the end it was misunderstood that I was supposed to have a physical relationship with everyone, and that rumor was circulated around the school.

It was hell.

I was weak and poor; I couldn't clear up the misunderstanding.

One of the member who truly believed it hit me from behind at night...

By the time I left the hospital, the Geography Club had become deserted and I had the worst nicknames, such as 'Circle Crusher', 'Small Carnivorous Plant', or just plain 'Slut'... , hahaha...

Painful.

Even at university, or even in society, it was not as serious as that, but there were similar incidents.

I failed at trying to overcome real human relationships as safely as possible.

It was troublesome trying to be involved with other people other than for business, and so I got addicted to something.

It was game speedruns².

Fiction wouldn't try to go as far as trying to hit me through the display screen!

How wonderful!

The memories I had remembered were mostly my disastrous experiences and the main strategy method of the game.

I was biased in my life experiences.

The more I traced as I followed the memory threads, there was no choice but to accept because I experienced it in real life.

So, I didn't dislike Erica.

Strong spirit.

Prideful.

Active.

She was a girl who seemed to embodied the strengths I admired in the past life.

She was close to my ideal except for the harassing people part.

If I were a girl like this, I wouldn't be harassed or stabbed by a misunderstanding Yandere man.

Maybe an ordinary human being would also be able to overcome it, but that was a trivial thing.

That's it!

I could change this romance-fantasy girl game into a happy-go-lucky fantasy girl game!

But, was it really possible?

At minimum, I would have to escape my mysterious deaths.

Then I felt like I could live more freely than my previous life.

Not bad.

Surely clues could be found in the memories of my previous life.

Why did Erica die?

That was because Erica trampled over the lives of other characters.

If I avoided that, I might be able to seek refuge in the middle of a fatal situation.

The dark past of each capture targets.

It was a death flag that Erica built herself.

Since that was the case, I could strike down the death flags with all my power.

However, there was something I want to check before that.

This 'memory' could also be my delusion.

It was possible that this wasn't a reincarnation but a sign that I was going crazy.

The young Erica was just playing with her 20-years-old older brother. She got sleepy when she read an easy-to-read book with a lot of pictures from her older brother's collection. She fell asleep on a chaise longue and she just came in front of the mirror with her messy hair again.

In order to judge whether my memory was a delusion or not, I had to make sure whether something that I knew had happened or not.

“Are you okay, Erica?”

It was my older brother that came close to me, worried about me who was leaning against the mirror.

Just in time.

“Your complexion isn't good.”

My brother's name was Edward Aurelia.

He was the first child of Duke of Aurelia and one of the heroine's capture target. He had the same blonde hue as Erica's, but his eyes were very kind and sweet.

“Onii-sama, thank you very much. I just got a little tired for a moment.”

“I see, you just read variety of books until a while ago. You should eat sweet things.”

Edward took out a small package from a small box on the table, and unwrapped the package.

“Here, open your mouth.”

When I opened my mouth, the chocolate grain was thrown in.

Onii-sama was always sweet to me.

“Is it delicious?”

“Yes.”

“Yeah, you’re a good girl, Erica.”

He stroked my hair with a gentle hand.

If I had such an older brother, I wouldn’t blame anyone for being a brocon.

Well then, I needed to get the information I wanted from my gentle older brother.

“Um, Onii-sama.”

“Hm, what is it, Erica? Do you want more chocolate?”

“If I ate too much before supper I would get fat.”

I felt bad for making my older brother’s smile dimmed a little.

But, I had to ask him about the incident at the beginning of this game.

“May I ask you about things in the northern, the ice and snow-covered, Lucanrant territory?”

“...What are you talking about?”

“About what happened in the North last year.”

“...You mean the Dukedom of Lucanrant Tragedy, huh...”

Edward-oniisama looked sad as he said it.

“That’s, when Erica gets a little older... I will tell you in detail at that time, now I want you to forgive me.”

“...I understand, Onii-sama. I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s okay, I’m sorry for being fussy, Erica.”

It would have been better if I could have a confirmation that there was a tragedy in the North called ‘Werewolf Massacre Incident.’

I didn’t think that the 20-years-old older brother would explain such a gruesome story to his 8-year-old sister in more details.

“Then, I will return to my room.”

With this, it was confirmed that this world is[Liber Monstrorum]

The phantom beasts – numerous monsters, werewolves, vampires – were the beginning of a strange world where they were engulfed in the shadows of the night.

¹ Liber Monstrorum: it is the latin of Book of Monster. It is a late seventh-or early eighth-century Anglo-Latin catalogue of marvellous creatures.

² Speedruns: a term in gaming where you tried to challenge yourself while gaming, whether it was to beat the highest score, beat it in the fastest time, or make all routes play-throughs.

Chapter 1

Spring Palace (1)

On the north of Ichthyes¹ continent where we lived, there was a country called Lucanrant.

It was a tough country in winter, it was also called Lucanrant the Ice and Snow Country.

I knew about the tragedy that happened in Lucanrant from the memory of my previous life.

One of the people in the Duchy of Lucanrant had gone mad and killed all of his family members.

—It was rumored that he wasn't mad, but he was a werewolf, and somehow that whispered rumor seemed very plausible.

Actually, there was one person who survived this 'Werewolf Massacre Incident.'

That person was the heroine of this game, Chloe Lucanrant.

After this incident, Chloe was hidden by a wealthy merchant's family, and used the pseudonym Chloe Croakina.

She would enter the Leandez Magic Academy in the autumn when she was 14-years-old, seven years after the Incident, and would be involved again in a bizarre incident.

Pretty sure there were seven capture targets. And each hero had an individual scenario.

If you cleared the initial scenario, it was the type of a game where scenarios were released one after the other.

I was still in the middle of playing this game and had only cleared up two scenarios.

I had just started the third scenario in the commuter train in my last day.

Yeah, I had not completed the game.

I was stabbed three days after the release date!

Hahaha, it's painful, isn't it!

Apart from that.

First of all, I had to summarize the memory of my past life and my current life.

Let's spread out the large parchment of a map and let us confirm the geography of this world.

This continent was roughly composed of four regions.

Lucanrant in the north, Harvan in the east, Aurelia in the west, and Ignitia in the south.

These were all old country names, and royalty of those old countries dominated these areas.

The northern Lucanrant was an extremely old country where its people had to migrate north just to make their own country, and they produced many brutal swordsmen who were strong and healthy.

The eastern Harvan was the second oldest country made by an ethnic group that visited this continent, it was located deep in the forest, and they produced versatile mages.

The southern Ignitia was a country of dragon knights who could ride on dragons.

At that time when they came to the southern region, the one who dominated Ichthyes was a country called Cascadia.

Ignitia destroyed Cascadia by the mighty strength of the dragon knights and conquered the southern part of this continent.

They were proud conquerors.

The western Aurelia was the alchemists' country made by the <Visitor's Clan> who was the last to come to this continent.

It was still impossible to turn lead into gold, but since we found enormous gold veins, it was the wealthiest region.

The current Duke of Aurelia was my father.

My mother died before I was three years old. Since then, my father was still single without remarrying.

My memory about mother was very few.

I could only remember her gentle singing voice and the touch of a gentle fingertip touching my cheek.

Was it because I was an unfeeling child or because it was hard to establish memory before three years old?

“Erica-sama~~, where are you~~?”

I heard the voice of the maid who was searching for me.

I was caught up in the sentimentality about my mother, but now not so much.

An event that would probably trigger my death flag could start anytime soon.

Now I wanted detailed information about the Aurelia in the west and Harvan in the east.

I would like to reinforce the knowledge I had lived as Erica Aurelia.

Especially, because—

“Oh, found you. Don’t trouble your maid too much, Erica.”

I was found by my older brother.

By the way, this was my older brother’s study room.

It was not impossible for him to find me here.

“Onii-sama, I wasn’t hiding or running away. Before triggering my death flags, I have to collect information and be prepared!”

“Death flag...?”

Oops, my mouth slipped.

“Ah, no, never mind.”

“Hm, then, let’s go. Everyone is waiting for you.”

I didn’t think that I would meet that person the next day after I remembered the memory of my previous life.

I was just barely surpassed the save line.

I would have committed an irreparable mistake if I was late another day in remembering my past life.

Today was the day when the eastern Harvan family visited the western Aurelia family. Among them, he was the capture target of the starting scenario of [Liber Monstrorum] – he was Klaus Harvan.

The Klaus who I knew, that was, the Klaus who was one of the game’s capture targets had such characters.

At the age of sixteen, he was a versatile mage.

A dignified sharp face.

A cruel character.

He was a boy with dark eyes filled with regrets that couldn’t be wiped out and a human being who looked resigned all the time.

Although he was supposed to have blue eyes and black hair in the setting, in the CG his eyes were drawn with a color as close to black as possible.

Why did he become such a person?

That was because he thought Ann Harvan, his sister, was killed due to his fault.

But, the one who actually killed Ann Harvan, was me.

To be precise, it was me who brought Ann to a place where the danger of death was hanging in plain sight.

It was the young villainous lady Erica Aurelia, who was the cause of Klaus' sister's death.

(This part will become the cause of my death six years later.)

Every owl that were used to deliver a letter was killed, the land where the magic academy resided become a solitary island.

And then, with her whole body turned into gold, the dead body of Erica Aurelia was discovered.

This was the beginning of the first scenario, 'The Golden Madness Murder Case.'

If I had to spoil it, so Ann went into the ancient ruins of Aurelia and was possessed by an evil spirit.

The evil spirit of the ancient ruins was a legendary alchemist.

He, who was the only one that succeeded in creating the Philosopher's stone, had been killed by his compatriots who were trying to get the secret of its creation.

An evil spirit possessed by revenge, nostalgia, love, and hate caused a continuous death by 'the Curse of Midas²' at the academy.

Ann, who had been assimilated with the evil spirit for six years, aimed first at me who had killed her and killed me.

Yes, I could understand that feeling so much.

So.

Today I met that pair of brother and sister, Klaus and Ann!

I didn't feel bad, but I didn't know what would happen and I was afraid of dying!

What if when I met Klaus and Ann, I woke up as a villain?

Like the original Erica, I might become a villainous lady that pushed a person into a trap – I couldn't stop trembling when I thought about everything that could go wrong.

“Erica, are you okay? Are you cold, you seem to be trembling...”

My gentle older brother carefully put his hand on my forehead.

Thank you very much, Onii-sama.

He treasured his younger sister who had awoken the memory of her past life without change.

“I’m okay, Onii-sama. I will be seeing some of Harvan’s people for the first time, so I am a bit nervous.”

“You can rest assured, Erica. Eastern people are gentle and kind. Oh yeah, the son of Duke Harvan is older than you by two years, while his daughter is a year younger than you.”

“Yes, I have heard from Oto-sama. Klaus-sama and Ann-sama, right?”

“It will be good if you can become friends.”

“Yes.”

I had calmed down when I was talking to my older brother.

I would do my best.

It was yesterday that I awoken the memory of my previous life, so the countermeasure hadn’t been prepared properly.

Still, it wasn’t good to be crushed by tension from the beginning.

“Aah, that’s right. I will give this to you. Because a spell for courage was put on the stone, even the shy Erica surely can be friendly to your new friends.”

As he said that, my older brother hung a necklace with a stone which had a hint of blue light around my neck.

(This is, a star crystal...)

The star crystal was a mineral which was Aurelia's special product.

It had another name which was <star of the navigator>.

It was a crystal of a special mineral that emits light as its surroundings got darker in response to weak magical powers.

When you used a piece of star crystal in the size of the tip of a fingernail into a glass tube and used it as a lamp, it kept the same brightness as a candle.

In this <Spring Palace>, such star crystal lamps had been installed everywhere.

However, I had never seen crystals that were large in size and weren't put into a container like this necklace.

"Onii-sama, this is—"

"This is a secret from father, okay? This is the result of my friend from the magic academy's research into the Ruins of Visitor. I thought that it's a good gift for Erica. I had the stone cut and tailored it to a necklace. Star crystals of this size, it shouldn't exist anywhere in this world except in that ruins."

"Eeh...!?"

Ruins of Visitor.

The moment I heard those words, I stiffened.

"Onii-sama, thank you very much. But Otou-sama said that the ruins are dangerous...?"

"That's why, keep this a secret from father"

<Ruins of Visitor> was a place where Ann would lose her life and it was the place where the evil spirit was sleeping.

The reason why Klaus and Ann sneaked into the Ruins of Visitor at the game[Liber Monstrorum]was the star crystals.

To Ann who wanted this beautiful jewel, the young lady Erica told Ann about the dangerous ruins.

Erica's line in the game played in my head with her character's voice.

(This is an important stone from Onii-sama! If you want it, you can find it yourself!)

This was–! This was my true death flag!!

I almost threw the necklace away from the window just now, but I couldn't do it to the present from my older brother and his friend.

If possible, I would like to avoid wearing it too noticeably when meeting with the Harvan family.

I spoke with my older brother carefully and smartly so that no suspicious behaviors appeared.

“Onii-sama, I’m very happy, but... it’s too obvious. Otou-sama will be there with us after all.”

“Hmm, as expected that’s not good.”

“Then, how about hiding it under my dress?”

“I see, that’s alright.”

I will steadily strike down the death flags.

¹ Ichthyes (イクテュエス): means Pisces in Greek. The more you know lol.

² Midas: it was a story about a king who was so greedy and wished that everything he touched turn into gold. Meaning, the Curse of Midas is where people died by turning into a gold statue.

Chapter 2

Spring Palace (2)

At the drawing room of Spring Palace, we had a meeting with the Duke of Harvan.

The theme of this visit seemed to be the conversation about the development of the silver ore veins at the boundary between Aurelia territory and Harvan territory and the surrounding forest resources.

My father, Duke of Aurelia, was in his forties.

His stroked back golden hair had some white hairs mixed within.

He had short beards on his jaw.

His looks and personality were similar to Edward-oniisama.

He was very sweet to his family, but he was also a proud person with many meritorious deeds.

My older brother and I who had dressed up was lining next to him.

Then, Duke Harvan and his wife, along with their two children appeared before us.

The Duke of Harvan was younger than my father.

Although he was already in his thirties, he had a beautiful youth style with black hair and gray eyes with a sharp impression.

He was wearing the magician's formal wear which consisted of loose pale grey robe.

At first glance it was plain and simple, but it was a very beautiful clothing with fine silver embroidery.

The Duchess was a bit young.

She was a woman who seemed energetic and refreshing.

She was wearing a light blue dress with little decorations, her black hair was in an

updo, and she had deep azure eyes.

She was an adult woman who combined elegant beauty with mellow cuteness.

Then, there were Klaus the first child and Ann the second child.

Klaus was wearing a black extravagant clothing with silver threads, while Ann was wearing a neat white dress with silver threads.

Both of them were similar to their father in facial expression, while their hair and eyes were similar in color with their mother.

Their straight black hair looked silky, and their intense blue eyes were impressive.

Klaus was especially stood out with the transformation from his dark impression in the game to the bright, child-like facial expression he wore right now.

He looked like a healthy boy who had never been hurt with plenty of confidence.

I wished he could grow up as a refreshing, healthy young lad as he was.

After the greetings and introductions, Duke Harvan and my father talked about the subject of today's agenda.

The Duchess of Harvan deemed to decide to take a look around inside the Spring Palace, accompanied by my older brother.

Then I, Erica Aurelia, along with the Harvan siblings, were told to play in the palace's extensive garden.

During this season, Spring Palace, just like its name, was a flower-filled palace.

And the most beautiful place in the palace, Knot Garden, an ornamental flower garden¹, was a large garden with hundreds of flowers, consisting of three gardens of roses.

“Then, from now on I will introduce the garden.”

“Oi, woman. I don't feel like getting along with you, absolutely no way.”

—Did this person have a personality like this?

I mean, why was a 10-years-old boy calling a girl who was younger than him by two years with the term ‘woman’?

No, this was right.

Klaus Harvan was not only ruthless and gloomy, but he was also a Do-S man. I forgot about that because of his refreshing boyish looks.

“In the first place, I don’t even want to came here! I don’t understand why should my father have to come here, the newcomer of the west.”

Even if you told me such a thing.

In the Spring Palace of Aurelia, there were many transfer gates installed, in addition it was perfect for observing the surrounding mines and forest... that was how it was.

In the first place, Aurelia’s <Visitor’s Clan> arrived on this continent about six hundred years ago, so it was troubling to be called a newcomer.

“Hmph, I have no interest in such a place. Flowers are crap.”

“Onii-sama, please don’t say something childish like that. That is rude to Erica-sama.”

While I was thinking for a matter of seconds about how to counter that in a friendly way, help came when I was silent.

Ann was one year younger than me.

“That was such a rude thing to say to Erica-sama who will guide us through the gardens of Spring Palace, which is an honour.”

“Aah, I don’t want to be with you, Ann. If I’m together with women I will become weak.”

Well, I guessed he was this kind of person, yeah.

As expected, opposite sex should be limited to 2D.

However, it was slightly surprising that he took this kind of attitude towards his sister.

Even though he was a terrible siscon in the game.

"That's alright. Then, Klaus-sama please do whatever you like. I will show Ann-sama this garden."

"...Aah, I will do that."

Klaus left us and went into the palace quickly.

Even so, I wondered what he was going to do in other people's palace alone?

Well, whatever.

I should entertain Ann right now.

Today's mission was to protect her safety, not to take care of Klaus' mood.

Absolutely, I wouldn't even get close to the western Aurelia's number one Ruins of Visitor!

"I apologize, Erica-sama. My older brother has done something very rude."

"I don't mind it. Thank you for your consideration, Ann-sama."

"I should be the one thanking you, Erica-sama."

Even though she was younger than Klaus, Ann was prim and polite.

Her favourable rating within me rose steadily.

Also, one of my concerns was solved.

As a result of meeting Klaus and Ann, Erica Aurelia, the villainous lady who was sleeping within me, was awakened!

...Nothing like that happened, I was still me.

"I was looking forward for this very much. I heard it from the rumors. This large garden is so wide that you can't see everything even if you exhaust yourself."

"Oh my, is this your first garden?"

"Yes. There are no people in the east who have low-cut trees like this. So it is very

unusual – Ah, those flowers are–!?”

Although Ann was still seven years old, Ann was very intelligent.

Then she seemed to have a lively, child-like sensitivity.

After we went to the area of Knot Garden that consisted only of evergreen trees, we headed towards the ornamental garden in which a wide variety of flowers were in full-bloom.

Each one seemed to be unusual for her.

“These are dwarf lavenders. It is an improvement form of the original, so their petals are larger.”

“Their pale purple colors are very beautiful... Ah, what is that single white flower?”

“It is one of our original rose species. If you like it, I will tell the gardener to pick several of them for you.”

“...Is it alright?”

“Yes. Please add your favorite flowers to your liking.”

It wasn’t bothersome to listen to the little girl’s request.

I believed that being nice was the basic manner to become intimate with children.

“Is it *really* alright?”

“Yes, Ann-sama is my precious guest.”

I kept smiling to her.

Ann’s face turned red.

“...Thank you very much...”

Unlike her brother, she was very honest and cute.

Well, Klaus was not honest because that was his selling point, so it couldn’t be helped.

Because there was a demand for that in the world of my previous life.

And, in my mind, I remembered the world where Ann had died.

(That kind of thing absolutely should not happen. I don't want such a child to die.)

Of course, there was also her cuteness.

I sincerely felt bad that she would be cursed and killed by an evil spirit.

¹ Actually written as a parterre (パーテア), which is an ornamental garden with paths between the flower beds.

Chapter 3

Spring Palace (3)

The tour of the garden ended pleasantly.

Ann was very happy.

She looked very surprised at the improved flowers in the western Aurelia and enjoyed the tour.

I remembered to return to the gardener on my way back to bundle the flowers Ann picked up and decorate her room with them.

She would be pleased when she got to her room.

Once I was about to return to my room before the dinner party began, I came across a surprising thing.

“...Haah, not yet, another round...!!”

“This is an embarrassment. Aren’t you already out of breath, Klaus? I’m already hungry, so let’s stop this here...”

It seemed that Klaus and my older brother Edward had been sparring in the courtyard of the palace.

Klaus had a long staff that was used by the mages of the East, while Edward-oniisama had a short wand that was used by the alchemists of the West.

Apparently, Edward-oniisama was winning.

As expected from Onii-sama.

No, wait, your sparring partner was a child so go easy on him, you 20-years-old man.

The lawn of the courtyard roughly had hollowed out, huh.

"Oh, Erica. How was it for you?"

Edward-oniisama came over with a look like '*I was saved*' when he found me.

I saw Klaus trembling from hearing his voice...

A scene of being thoroughly defeated like that, he wouldn't want anyone to see it.

"Well, Ann-sama was very pleased. Have the two of you been bonding with each other?"

"Aah, Klaus-kun said he wants to try my strength. Well, he's very good. I was defending against him."

"Oh my, is that so?"

I hoped for your continued humility.

It was better for you to be careful as exaggerating humility felt unpleasant to see, Onii-sama.

Perhaps he invalidated all aggressive magic that Klaus sent with a calm face?

"Tch...!"

See, the trembling Klaus turned red.

In the first place, in this spar Klaus was in a disadvantage, if you thought about it.

Basically, mages far outperform alchemists with their degrees of freedom and variation of spells.

However, the physical and mental burden was correspondingly high.

That was because to perform a spell, mages used magical power that they generated from their own body.

Such things like inexperienced body and an unstable mind would obstruct everything.

Conversely, the magic composed by evoking a strong emotion became enormously powerful.

Alchemists created some constructions with built-in spells beforehand and filled them with magical power, which could be stored for various utilizations.

Then, performed magic as necessary afterwards.

Neither physical condition nor mental health was relevant.

The question was whether or not they had prepared for the situation properly.

As the result, the alchemist Edward who had stored items sufficiently, with the mage Klaus who had not complete his physical maturity, it would not even be a match.

By the way, I, Erica was an inferior student which was rarely found in Aurelia family in recent years.

The fatal thing was, I couldn't build spells nor store magical power.

I could barely use the items created by other alchemists.

Actually, that could be done by any human, even if they weren't alchemist... but... , hahaha.

Harsh!

Right now I was under the patronage of my father and older brother, but what would happen when I entered the academy!?

Apart from that.

"Both of you, the dinner party will start soon. Isn't it better to use the time to prepare?"

I passed on my calm brother who was not sweating, and looked at Klaus' body.

"That's why, Klaus-kun. This game is a draw, so time out."

"...Tch, I will not lose next time..."

“Oh, that’s right. I was called by my friend from school a few days ago. After dinner party I will be returning to Leandez Magic Academy.”

“What did you say...!?”

“Well, I’m sorry. Klaus-kun.”

This was my first time hearing that my older brother would be returning to Leandez Magic Academy tonight.

I guessed Edward-oniisama used this chance to flee from Klaus.

“That’s so sudden, isn’t it possible to stay, at least while the Harvan’s people are here?”

“This is urgent. Make friends with Klaus-kun for my part too, Erica.”

“Eh...? Alright.”

And then Edward-oniisama left.

Klaus and I were left behind.

This was awkward.

I glanced at Klaus and caught him scowling at me openly.

Smiling while thinking on what to do, he scowled at me even more.

“...I apologize for saying something rude before.”

He stopped scowling at me, just looking at me with honest eyes.

“It’s fine, Klaus-sama.”

“It seems that I was originally weak even before I caught the weakness from the others.”

Klaus looked like a dejected puppy.

Edward-oniisama, just what did you do...?

“You are the sister of that man. You must be a refined alchemist.”

“No, I have no alchemy talent at all.”

“...Do you like such humility?”

Aah, after Edward-oniisama’s exaggerating humility, it *would* be suspicious.

“No, it’s true. Unfortunately, the magical power for spells and magic is obstructed inside my body.”

“...! I see, I’m sorry to hear that.”

Even in the western Aurelia this kind of constitution was a bit severe, but in the eastern Harvan this was quite a fatal constitution.

Suddenly Klaus’ eyes that were looking at me turned sympathetic.

Reflecting on this, I was seriously concerned about my future.

Surely the Erica in the original game would have been distorted by her inferiority complex in this area.

“But, ah... don’t take this the wrong way, but there’s a problem, I feel a trace of strange magic around you. If that is not your own magical power, I wonder what generates that magic?”

Oops, what was it?

“Oh my, I have not noticed anything at all.”

Of course, I also had items with defense magic.

However, this was the home of Aurelia family.

There was no need to use such magic at home ground.

“That’s concerning. Sorry, can I come a little bit closer?”

“Eh? Yes, it’s alright.”

Klaus said so and came close to me.

He began to look at me closely.

“Hmm...”

Did you understand something?

As expected from someone who would be a versatile mage in the future.

“I understand, it comes from your chest. Are you holding some special ornaments with magical power?”

Aah, you mean that-!

The star crystal necklace I got from Onii-sama.

“I got this from my older brother this morning. I didn’t know that such powerful magic was embedded within.”

I couldn’t show this to Ann, but since it was just Klaus there shouldn’t be any problem. Having said that, I pulled out my necklace from under my dress.

Right now it was evening.

Blue light from the star crystal overflowed in the dim surroundings.

“...Beautiful. So this is the famous Aurelia’s star light...”

“This is a good luck charm for me to make friends.”

I thought it was just on the level of a good luck charm, but it seemed that it seriously fascinated other people?

Klaus stared at me as if he was fascinated.

“It is not your brother’s magic. On the contrary, it is a type of magic I don’t know. It doesn’t belong to Harvan or to Aurelia.”

“Well, I heard that this was what was found in the Ruins of Visitor. It may be some kind of ancient magic.”

“Ruins of Visitor, huh.”

Oh no, something was wrong.

Somehow the fact that the keyword itself came out, it felt like a prelude for bad things to happen.

“But, why didn’t Edward-oniisama notice the magic inside this stone?”

“I also thought that it’s just my imagination since the magic is very faint. But, magic that I don’t know, this is quite rare.”

This was Klaus who was an excellent mage.

He probably noticed it since he was using Glam Sight¹ that could visually sense traces of magic.

His magic would activate automatically even when he was not conscious.

Unfortunately, us western alchemists couldn’t respond to unexpected events.

It was no wonder that Edward-oniisama didn’t notice this.

Even so, Klaus was surprisingly someone who had great ambition, huh~

Although he had not entered the magic academy, he had covered the East and West magic.

“It’s amazing that you noticed that, Klaus-sama.”

“Naturally. This is the result of training to my utmost every day.”

I felt that Klaus’ eyes were glittering.

Talented people were curious and greedy for their favorite field.

“I also want to go to the ruins. Erica, will you show me the way?”

-This flow, I only had bad feelings about this.

Somehow my death flag seemed to have been raised.

In the game, Ann was possessed by the evil spirit in the Ruins of Visitor.

If Klaus went to the ruins instead of Ann, Klaus would be possessed by evil spirit, and then he would curse me~~!!

“That’s impossible. Because that is a dangerous place.”

“Wasn’t it possible for Edward to go there without problems? Or, do you think it’s impossible for me?”

Oh no, I triggered a strange sense of rivalry from him!

I guessed I would hurt his pride if I said that was the truth.

What should I do?

¹ I changed Gram Sight into Glam Sight. I think it makes more sense.

Chapter 4

Spring Palace (4)

After that, I escaped from the pursuit of Klaus somehow and headed for the dinner party.

As soon as Klaus talked about the matter of the ruins during dinner, my father and Duke of Harvan stopped him very solemnly.

It couldn't be helped. It was not a place where a 10-years-old child could go.

When the topic about the ruins came out, I found it secretly amusing that my older brother looked unruffled on the outside but feeling anxious inside.

It was a good thing that I forbid Klaus to speak about the matter of Edward-oniisama went into the Ruins of Visitor~~.

When the dinner party was over, Edward-oniisama was about to head to Leandez Magic Academy that was located in the central part of the continent through the Spring Palace's transfer gate.

Transfer gates were located in the basement of important buildings and provided warp function by magically connecting the gates at each sites.

My older brother received one key from father after the dinner party, and he would use the one-time-key to go to the academy.

I suddenly felt uneasy because of my conversation with Klaus.

I wanted to hear about the magic that was spelled in this star crystal, so I caught up with my older brother who was holding a baggage in his room.

“Onii-sama, I’m sorry to hold you up when you are in a hurry, but could I ask you something about this necklace?”

“Hm, what about the necklace, Erica?”

“Klaus-sama was concerned about the magic inside this necklace. *Very special magic.*”

“Hee, a special magic, huh... Please lend it to me, Erica.”

With his eyebrows slightly furrowed, my older brother was staring at the star crystal. Edward-oniisama spread out his leather handbag on the floor while crouching on the spot.

“Is that Wunderkammer...?”

We sorted our reservoir of gathered alchemists' prepared items into a miracle room, Wunderkammer.

The leather bag seemed to have an expanded interior space.

My older brother built a Wunderkammer inside it.

“Well, the magic for expanding space was very expensive...”

“That's right...”

My older brother said that with distant eyes.

Incidentally, even the materials to create the kind of wands that were stored inside cost an enormous amount of money.

I guessed this was quite a splurge, Edward-oniisama.

I didn't know the specific price, but even if I just looked at it roughly, I believed that I could sell off one or two silver veins that my older brother would inherit in the future.

“Well, I will investigate it now.”

Edward-oniisama picked out a piece of sugar maple wand from among the large number of short wands inside the Wunderkammer.

At the end of the wand was a piece of emerald.

On the part of the handle, there was a workmanship imitating a feather of a peacock made from mother of pearls.

Perhaps the core material was a feather of a peacock.

The length of the short wand was just the length of a conductor's baton.

On such a small tool, more than 50 charges, or over 100 charges if it was the finest wand, of magic was put into it.

How convenient~ I thought, but each one could only contain one type of magic.

To deal with every situation, countless short wands were needed.

So preparation was important for the western alchemists.

Edward-oniisama swung the wand like a conductor.

Green light spread around my older brother and converged on his eyes.

With this, Edward-oniisama's eyes temporarily turned into Glam Sight.

The magic of an alchemist in this world was all done manually.

"I see. This is amazing."

"How is it?"

"Because I found it at the Ruins of Visitor, I thought that the magic was of that era. But in actuality, it is older. At least before Ignatia conquered the southern part of this continent."

It was around 650 years ago that the founder of the western Aurelia arrived at this place.

When the invading Ignatia destroyed Cascadia and placed the southern part of this continent under their control, that was the story of about 150 years ago before that.

Together it would be 800 years ago.

Cascadia was a country of vampires.

It was a dark nation where the vampire royalty and aristocracy dominated human beings like a livestock—at least, that was how it was reported.

In other words, the magic put on this stone was likely to belong to the vampires of Cascadia.

It was not necessarily the truth, though.

“It means that it was the magic used by the vampires.”

“Aah, I see.”

On this continent, vampire was a phantom beast that had been extinct hundreds of years ago.

But, it seemed that vampires would come out in the scenario which I had not yet completed.

“Fortunately it is safe for us. Because us western human beings are all dense to the magic of this kind. But—I’m afraid that both East and North humans are sensitive and will be affected by it.”

“What kind of magic was put inside the stone?”

“I will say that it’s close to a fascination, but it’s more than that... Yes, it seems to be spelled to evoke desire... It seems better for me to hold on to this stone a bit longer.”

Magic that evoked desire, huh.

Suddenly I remembered the tragedy of Klaus and Ann in [Liber Monstrorum]. In the first place, why would the very polite Ann want the necklace that Erica had?

—It might be because of the desire evoked by this necklace.

“Erica, I don’t know if it will replace me, but here.”

This was the key for Onii-sama’s wonderful Wunderkammer.

The stored items were also equivalent to a lifeline for our family.

“Onii-sama, why are you giving this important thing to me?”

“Because you seem very uneasy. I have to go to Leandez Magic Academy for my friend. Actually I’d like to be by your side... But I’m also needed there for something.”

“Onii-sama...”

“It’s alright, if there is nothing extraordinary, I should be able to come back tomorrow morning.”

After he said that, my older brother went to Leandez Magic Academy through the underground transfer gate.

I headed towards the guest room at Spring Palace.

It was to confirm the safety of Klaus and Ann.

I didn’t care that my long dress entangled with my legs, I was running in the palace corridor at night.

Events that had occurred today were floating in my mind one after the other.

Ann’s smile, with dyed cheeks among the blossoming flowers.

Klaus’ sparkling eyes when looking at the magic of my star necklace.

The necklace with ancient magic—faint but bewitching blue light.

I wanted to see Ann’s smile and Klaus’ scowl as soon as possible to give me a peace of mind.



The guest rooms that were used as accommodation for the children of Duke Harvan, were plentifully decorated with the flowers of this spring garden.

There was a fragrant scent of flowers in the room.

However, I couldn’t find the figures of Klaus and Ann.

All the maids serving Duke of Harvan were falling asleep by magic.

I made sure that Ann was not confused among the sleeping maids, but she wasn't there either.

-Perhaps this was the work of Klaus.

Although he was only a 10-years-old boy, Klaus' magical abilities were exceptional.

These women weren't just maids, but maids that had served the duke.

In other words, they had some knowledge of magic.

If so, they should have a mild magic resistance.

I believed that the maids were took out by a powerful sleeping magic so that he could sneak away.

I wondered what time was this magic used.

It was also worrying that the one who disappeared was not only Klaus, but Ann too.

A person like Klaus would have headed for Ruins of Visitor.

Ten to one, no doubt.

For Ann, if good luck was on my side, she might be with the Duke and Duchess of Harvan.

(For confirmation, I should hurry up and see the Duke of Harvan or my father, shouldn't I?)

It wasn't good if this situation became widespread and panic occurred.

I closed the door, crossed the corridor and headed to my father's room.

I walked about fifteen minutes.

I should have reached my father's room since a long time ago, but I reached the original room I set out from.

At this point, I understood that I was lost in a familiar place.

It was a magic that turned the palace into a labyrinth.

However, no matter how much an excellent mage Klaus was, he shouldn't be able to use space distortion magic.

This was probably a Phantasmal Maze.

It was a magic that dazzles as though it was a labyrinth by messing out the sense of direction of a passing human being and put them under an illusion.

Because of this magic, Spring Palace seemed to have been divided into several compartments.

I couldn't even go to the Duke of Harvan or my father, the Duke of Aurelia, and the adults would never reach their children's room.

For a 10-years-old to be able to master this complex magic...

I couldn't hide my surprise at Klaus' talent.

(I mean, this kind of careful preparation is too much, Klaus-!)

Taking a deep breath, at this time I should calm down and think.

“Edward-oniisama, it seems that I’m going to use it this soon.”

I looked at the key to the Wunderkammer that I received from my older brother earlier.

I put it into the keyhole of an appropriate room and turned it.

This key itself was a magic item that could turn any door in this palace into a door that was connected to my older brother’s Wunderkammer.

When I opened the door, the Wunderkammer of the alchemist Edward Aurelia appeared before me.

So if you don't understand the work of a wand, the amount of magic inside a wand is depending on the maker. For example, a wand is charged 100 times with magic, that means the user can only use that wand for 100 times. And each wand could only be powered with one type of magic.

The difference with a staff of Harvan is that a staff is a medium for mages to channel their magic. So it used the magical power generated by the user, while a wand used the magical power that had been stored inside it.

That's why, while mages are depending on the versatility and the magical power of the user, alchemists are depending on the type of wands they have prepared beforehand.

Chapter 5

Spring Palace (5)

This was my first time to step in to my older brother's Wunderkammer.

Wunderkammer was not only an alchemist's workshop, but it was also a museum of magical materials collected from every corner of the world.

In the center of the room there was a large desk-like workbench.

Some burn mark-like stains and traces of some kind of liquid overflowing were there.

On the large desk, there were various laboratory equipment and processing instruments. Glass test tubes, distillation bottles, burners, oil lamps, etc. were in order.

On the right cabinet, there were specimens of eidolon beasts.

Especially noticeable was the horn of the unicorn that was ordered from Harvan of the East and the fossil of a basilisk we got from the southern region.

There were many fossil specimens, but a lot of bottled preserved specimens were also stored.

On the left cabinet, there was a tightly displayed ore samples from Aurelia.

Not only regular ores, but also special ores with original magical effects were collected.

All specimens were stored in boxes and bottles of a certain size, and labels describing their origins and characteristics were stuck on them.

The meticulous older brother's personality was well-represented by the cabinets.

Inside the front cabinet were stocked a number of wands with built-in magic that were made using these materials.

Boxes of wands were stacked so that they couldn't be counted.

Inside these small boxes were also stored detailed notes on the spelled magic and materials that were used.

There were many wands that could use the same magic, but their power and effects differ slightly depending on which material used to make it.

It seemed that my older brother was living here day and night researching to grasp the differences of each and draw out the best magic.

From what I understood, there was no such wand to cancel Klaus' Phantasmal Maze.

The next action was decided by this.

It would be difficult to seek help from my father or other adults.

At least, I had to keep track of Klaus and Ann.

I examined the clothes boxes in one corner of the Wunderkammer.

Of course the clothes boxes were also labelled.

While checking the label, I found the clothes box that my older brother was using around eight years old and opened it.

I dragged out my older brother's boyhood clothes that I had found.

I took off my clothes and wore my older brother's old clothes.

My hair was gathered behind with a ribbon.

Put a silver pocket watch into the coat pocket.

Fitted on the alchemists' leather gloves.

After putting on the black leather boots, I slung the biggest leather bag I found in this room over my shoulder.

Both were waterproofed with grease.

Put two lamps made of fragments of star crystal quenched with antioxidant in the bag.

The most important thing was choosing the wands that had been filled with magic.

Wand of Glam Sight.

This was the same wand as what Edward-oniisama used.

The effect lasted for about 30 seconds.

Wand of Hold.

It was made of amber, and the stick head was made using the fossil of cockatrice coated with celluloid.

On the handle, there were workmanships of a chicken and snake made of sterling silver.

The core material was a dried basilisk tail.

The duration of the effect was about 3 seconds.

Stuffed two or three for each enchanted wand into the leather bag along with other wands that could be used.

Wand of Gust.

Wand of Urd Sight¹.

Wand of Levitation.

Wand of Castling².

Wand of Feather Falling.

Wand of Lock.

Wand of Grease.

Wand of Mage Finger³.

Wand of Water Walking.

I was looking over the wands and found a wand that was strictly locked.

This was... a Wand of Sailor's Song.

Only this wand was special.

When singing a specific song while swinging this wand, it was said that <Alchemist's Star> would fall.

With the magic of <Alchemist's Star>, we were also called <Aurelia the Star>.

On the other hand, the reaction when it was used was not on the degree of other wands.

If a mediocre alchemist used it without understanding how to make use of it, it was said that just dropping one star would drop his own life.

It was too dangerous, I couldn't use it.

One magical rope.

It seemed that the utilization was similar to a wand.

It could be used freely a certain number of times.

One bottle of Obscuring Mist.

One bottle of Moonlight Gallnut Ink.

It was an ink made from Harvan's special ore.

The letters written with this ink emit light only when the moon was out.

Because there was no ordinary Gallnut Ink, this had to be enough for the time being.

A piece of chalk.

Just to be safe, I packed a pen and a scrap of parchment.

Put a bottle of distilled liquor and a small box of chocolate for precaution.

Finally, I picked up an athame knife⁴.

I left my older brother's Wunderkammer, close the door, and locked it.

First of all, let's use the Wand of Glam Sight.

Pale green magic circle appeared and converged on my eyes.

When the magic showed its effect, I quickly used it on Spring Palace, and then detailed information about the magic of Phantasmal Maze appeared before me.

Creator unknown, the performer was Klaus Harvan, the time it was set up was about thirty minutes ago.

Speaking of thirty minutes ago, it was when I saw Onii-sama off.

It seemed that Klaus went out of the room due to my blunder.

Duration of the magic was three to four hours from the time of creation.

It was as I thought.

It would be too late if I waited for the effect to be over before asking help from my father or Duke Harvan.

The creator and the performer were different, because it was a magic that was launched from a scroll.

This magic was set up by the magical power of Klaus and the spell cards.

There seemed to be small spell cards on several places in this palace.

Both scrolls and spell cards were mainstream magic in the eastern Harvan.

They should have roles like a blueprint and an amplifier respectively.

It seemed that the spell cards that had been spread out create a barrier and amplified the enchanted magic, so they created a vast labyrinth.

Next, let's examine the underground transfer gates.

As I began to run, I remembered the scene when my older brother was going to go to the magic academy.

—Huh? The underground transfer gates were managed by one-time keys.

How did Ann go to the Ruins of Visitor in the original scenario?

¹ Urd is the name of one of the three Norns (Fates) in Norse mythology. Urd is the one representing the past. So, Wand of Urd Sight means that the wand could be used to see the past.

² Castling is the act of moving the King to a safe position in a blink of an eye, by trading the King's place with one of the Rook. So, Wand of Castling is for trading the place of the user with the target.

³ Wand of Mage Finger: The Japanese version of Mage Hand in D&D, it appears as a spectral, floating hand. The hand lasts for the duration or until the user dismisses it as an action. In this novel, it can only be used for fine works.

Edit: I have been translating this wrong as a hunting knife, but it is actually this:

⁴ Athame knife: a ceremonial blade, generally with black handle. The athame was not to be used for actual physical cutting.

So the Phantasmal Maze divided the palace into several compartments. People in one compartment couldn't go to another compartment unless they cancel the magic. This was why Erica couldn't go to the adults' rooms. Since Erica could go to Klaus and Ann's room from Edward's room, and from there go to the underground transfer gate, this means that all those rooms are in the same compartment. Besides, if Klaus and Ann's room were in different compartment from the underground transfer gate, they wouldn't be able to go to the Ruins of Visitor either.

Chapter 6

Spring Palace (6)

I ran down the dark stairs of the palace.

(Aah, it's a great thing that I had changed my clothes-)

I felt light compared to when I ran in a dress.

I mean, it was painful to wear a dress as someone who had a modern human's sensitivity.

Or it might be just my low femininity.

After a while, I arrived in the underground transfer gates.

The place was illuminated in the night in the warm light by the star crystal lamps.

“Maybe he’s not here anymore.”

I wished he was still sticking around in front of the transfer gates, but this was not the easy mode.

All around me, there were a lot of arched stones of the transfer gates lining up.

These were the transfer gates to go to the important places all over the country.

Each transfer gate was given a design representing its destination.

Every transfer gate had a faint glow with rotating magic circle floating around it.

They were magically sealed so that it couldn’t be activated without one-time keys.

Without hesitating, I ran towards the deepest transfer gate.

It was where the transfer gate to the ancient Ruins of Visitor was.

I arrived in front of the intended transfer gate and I felt disappointed.

“It needs keys...”

In addition to the one-time key magic circle, it also had a physical lock.

Even if you falsified the one-time key in some way, you still couldn't use the transfer gate.

What an awful ending.

Even though I borrowed supplies from my older brother's Wunderkammer, and I had assembled the perfect battle preparation.

However, rather than something happened, it was better that nothing happened.

-A sense of relief... was it alright to feel it?

But then, where did Klaus go?

I used the Wand of Glam Sight just to be safe.

Huh? This – this lock, it was a phantom!

The genuine lock was destroyed by someone.

But, somehow the one-time key magic circle was also an illusion.

The phantom that showed the lock as it was before destruction was created by Klaus Harvan.

He made it about thirty minutes ago.

The illusion of the one-time key was the thing that Duke of Aurelia, who was my father, made ten years ago.

The transfer gate to Ruins of Visitor was already outdated and old.

Therefore, it might not have been possible to set up a one-time key seal.

Instead, it was locked with a physical lock, and disguised it with an illusion as if there was a one-time key seal.

It was an effective camouflage for the western Aurelia who needed to spend a huge amount of money just to use Glam Sight.

But as the opponent was from the East, Klaus who was also an excellent mage, it wasn't effective at all.

Klaus looked at this camouflage and immediately realized that the seal was fake.

After destroying the physical lock, he disguised it with a phantom lock that was identical with the one my father made in order to mislead.

As a result, the false images of the magic and physical locks were completed.

“As expected, I have to go to the ruins and bring them back.”

To be honest, I was scared.

Even in my past life I was not good with evil spirits and ghost stories.

It was very scary to go to the Ruins of Visitor where such things really exist.

But—

“Wait for me, Klaus, Ann.”

If the Harvan siblings were in such a place—

If they were lost in the ruins without knowing what was going on or what was in there, then I had to save them.

I took a step forward into the transfer gate to the Ruins of Visitor.

If I was not mistaken, the words praising the land of the destination should be the command words to activate the magic.

I read the command words that were engraved on the transfer gate.

“Come, my friend, let’s give a new name to the Promised Land over this sea.”



—I felt a slight dizziness.

When I opened my eyes, I was on the first layer of the Ruins of Visitor.

The transfer gate was an ancient system in which spells were engraved on the floor openly.

In contrast to the Spring Palace which was made of white solid stones, the ruins were created by cutting out ordinary stones and piling them up.

The ruins were located near the west coast of the Aurelia territory.

I thought that I could smell the waves slightly.

Even though evening had come all the way, it was not completely dark.

The lamps which contained star crystals were installed on the wall, the weak gentle light which had a faintly yellowish color was illuminating the room.

Long time ago, the family that founded Aurelia of the West, was the last people who visited this continent.

Ethnic groups who had lived in this area first called them the Visitor’s Clan.

They were excellent navigators, alchemists, and people of a destroyed country who had lost their homeland.

Or maybe, they might have destroyed their homeland through excessive alchemy... but the details were uncertain.

Where they came from and what kind of past they had, were all covered in the darkness of history and disappeared.

Due to the inclusion of a piece of truth in those lore, the people of Aurelia had destroyed some of their forbidden technologies.

For example was their homunculus creation technology, which was imparted only

through the lore.

It was said that the secret of the ancient alchemy that had not yet been elucidated was preserved in this Ruins of Visitor.

I looked at my surroundings carefully with the Wand of Glam Sight.

At the moment, there was no other traces of magic than the magic of the transfer gate. First of all, that was a relief.

(As expected, this thing is useless when I applied it on the ruins.)

Additionally, I used the Wand of Urd Sight five times.

Five white lights generated from the wand spread throughout the room and converged on my eyes as the ripples reflected and returned.

Through the Urd Sight which reads and interprets the incidents that had passed, I could see the back of Klaus leaving from the exit on the left side of the room.

“Klaus... you came alone.”

When I continued to look around the room, I saw Ann reached this room through the transfer gate.

She seemed to have noticed something, and seemed that to have searched for one point in the room.

After that, she also headed for the exit on the left—

The past view ended there.

Apparently, after Klaus headed alone for this ruins, Ann who had noticed it seemed to have been following him. It would be preferable if the only one who entered the ruins was Klaus who had some skills.

I also looked at the place where Ann seemed to find something.

There was a spell card.

But it seemed that the magic had not been executed yet.

Since it was in a state not holding magical power, my Glam Sight didn't notice it...!

The spell card which was made with a parchment, had spells written in ancient characters of the eastern Harvan.

I was not particularly fluent in foreign languages.

If I could read the letters I might have gotten more hints, but even this alone was enough for me to keep track of them.

Let's chase Hansel and Gretel's unused spell cards of bread crumbs¹.

As I passed through the exit on the left side of the room, there seemed to be several rooms with similar composition.

Ah, I could see a narrow passage in the distance.

Once I arrived in the passage, there were lamps. It was not completely dark.

But, this was scary, though?

This ancient building, the Ruins of Visitor was in the underground and it had the atmosphere of an underground dungeon.

“I’m not scared of ghosts, I’m not scared, not scared...!”

For the sake of giving myself a fighting spirit, I raised my voice repeatedly.

Mustering a little bit of courage, I used the Wand of Glam Sight and Wand of Urd Sight alternately, and chase the back of the past Klaus and Ann.

Had I move 200 meters from the entrance? I had walked down the stairs four times, so my sense of direction became ambiguous.

I thought that monsters and ghosts were scary, but as I ran down the dark passage, I suddenly remembered my past life.

It was a memory when I was hit from behind at night during high school.

It was not fear that froze my spine, it was just a dark, gloomy feeling.

(No, I'm scared of human beings... Ah, I feel like I can score easy victory with such things like ghosts.)

Yes, humans were very scary.

The resentment of living humans, the envy, the hatred.

Such things were really, truly frightening.

As I remembered that memory, I met a human.

“You, are you Erica...!?”

There was the exhausted face of the eastern mage, Klaus Harvan.

¹ She compared the Harvan siblings with Hansel and Gretel, so if in the H&G story they used bread crumbs to remember the way, the Harvan siblings used unused spell cards.

Chapter 7

Ruins of Visitor (1)

“Klaus-sama! Are you okay? You’re okay, right!?”

I rushed towards Klaus in spite of myself.

I could finally see the face of Klaus who until now I could only see the back of, I was relieved from the bottom of my heart.

I guessed I was also relieved since I met a familiar face.

Gradually, the harsh expression on Klaus’ face disappeared.

“Aah, I have no problem. You are the one who is alone... You, what’s with that appearance?”

Uh, he got right to the point.

First of all, I thought about putting emphasis on practicality, and more than that I was in a hurry.

Regarding my coordination, it was quite appropriate.

“I borrowed the clothes of Edward-oniisama, thinking that you are in the ruins, because I couldn’t come to a place like this wearing a dress.”

“Oh, that sort of thing... you, you suit this appearance better.”

“Oh, it is a great honor to be praised by you.”

Well, it was still impossible for me to wear a luxurious dress after all!

I thought that Erica’s face suits it well enough.

Was the femininity of my soul insufficient as expected?

No, it was good enough that practical clothing suits me.

Let’s feel good.

“I’m glad I found you, this is the most dangerous place in Aurelia territory, you know?”

“I’m aware of that, I just didn’t expect to waste my magical power to such extent by searching this ruins for such a short time.”

Klaus had a hard face.

It was a dark and scary place, so I certainly felt like I was getting frustrated—

Had I had any difficulty in spending magic so far?

“Klaus-sama, what do you mean by that?”

“Erica, you, didn’t you notice it when you come to this place?”

“Not at all.”

“...You’re dense.”

“It couldn’t be helped because Western human beings are different from Eastern human beings.”

A dense place with a good sense, that was the virtue of the human beings from Aurelia territory.

I might not have noticed it because my efforts and talent weren’t enough, though.

“The magical effect that absorbs magical power is working on this ruins, even the activation of lower tier magic took a heavy burden since a little while ago.”

“Is there such a trap put on somewhere? Can you find out something if you use Glam Sight?”

“I already identified things that seem to be the starting point of the trap. But the spell to solve it doesn’t seem to be effective. I don’t know what kind of trap is this.”

“Surely, metals and jewels that impede magic are physically embedded.”

I heard that there were metals with such effects in Lucanrant.

Depending on the combination of minerals that I didn’t know, the same effect might be invoked, it was not only limited to the northern metals.

“It seems that wide area magic is blocked, and magic with effective range of 5 m or more in radius has failed.”

“That said, I heard from Onii-sama that there is a trap that has been activated, but I don’t know the effect.”

“Got it.”

Although we from Aurelia didn’t mind the effect, people from Harvan seemed to be pretty incompatible with it.

Ruins of Visitor were like the culmination of the lost techniques of Aurelia of the West.

Unexpectedly, these missing technologies might be said to be ‘abandoned’ by choice because of problems, rather than being ‘lost’.

Like a trap that obstructed the magical power that was not friendly to outsiders, for example.

“Because of that... I’d like you to see this for a moment.”

Klaus spread a parchment.

There were large rectangular outline and the name of the god of wind was written in twelve directions so as to surround it.

It was the most commonly used template in this world’s maps.

But, except for the frame and several lines of Harvan’s magic language, it was almost blank, and things that seemed like maps were not drawn.

“I tried to use Auto-mapping and put spell cards along the route. However, thanks to the troublesome trap, even if I cast the spell it wouldn’t react at all.”

“Oh, so it is a spell for that.”

“If I knew a little sooner that Auto-mapping would be invalidated, I wouldn’t search so deeply.”

Klaus shrugged his shoulders.

When the talk finished, I asked what I was really concerned about.

“Well, Klaus-sama. Where is Ann-sama?”

“Wha—! Why are you talking about Ann now?”

Klaus' body jumped in alarm.

Huh, this guy, didn't he feel like a small animal?

“In order to follow Klaus-sama, I was using Urd Sight. Then I could see Ann-sama as well as Klaus-sama...”

“I have not brought my sister here.”

“It seemed that she was pursuing Klaus-sama.”

“But, I'm certain that I had put my sister to sleep with a sleeping magic... , no way, that girl, did she use a reinforced Magic Resist in anticipation of me getting out?”

In his own way, he devised a plan to make sure his sister didn't come to this dangerous place.

I thought that he was cold to Ann, but he was a good older brother.

However, it seemed that his sister was one step ahead of him.

The young Ann was also an excellent mage like Klaus.

So, as a result of her insight and effort, she successfully Resist her brother's magic.

This, Klaus' secret was backfiring, wasn't it?

The more he said that she couldn't come, the more he hid it, the more she would be worried about it.

They were a curious pair of brother and sister.

“I didn't see my sister on the way so far, it seems that she followed another road somewhere.”

In the middle of devoting myself pursuing Klaus' back, I neglected to confirm Ann's whereabouts.

It was also because I was reluctant in using the expensive Wand of Urd Sight.
Perhaps it should have been used more finely.

"Would you like to trace our way back again, Klaus-sama? Let's go find your younger sister on our way back."

"...That's right. Apparently, I'm not prepared enough to get around these ruins."

Klaus glanced at my appearance and said that.

His gaze moved steadily to my alchemist's leather gloves, to my leather bag that was overflowing with wands, and to my boots that seemed to be durable on the floor.

"If I'm not cautious like you, it is likely to lose my way in the ruins."

I was feeling a bit relieved at being obediently heard.

I couldn't beat him if he said, '*I will definitely not turn back!*'

"If you decide so, let's search for Ann-sama immediately."

"Ah."

"If we couldn't find a way to find Ann-sama, we'll go back to Spring Palace at once."

"Ah, this maze is too much for children to navigate alone."

"Speaking of maze, please dispel the Phantasmal Maze in Spring Palace."

I had to ask him not to forget about it.

It was no wonder if many maids were distressed during this time.

"Mmm, you noticed it, didn't you?"

"If I didn't notice, I wouldn't bother to pick you up like this."

"I thought that you are much more enthusiastic in searching this ruins, so that is not really the case?"

“It’s not!”

It would be troublesome if it was misunderstood.

I had not come to explore like Klaus. I came to stop Klaus from exploring.

I didn’t even know if my father or Duke of Harvan would get angry at me, alright?

“While tracing our way back, let’s use Urd Sight at each branch. So we can see where Ann got deviated.”

“Is that a Wand of Urd Sight? Will you also let me use it? I have been using Glam Sight until you joined, it seems that it will take time to recover my magical power because of that.”

“I see. It might be more efficient for both of us to use Urd Sight rather than just me.”

Eastern magic cut not only mental power but also physical strength.

No matter how much a genius Klaus was, he was still a 10-years-old boy.

The Ruins of Visitor had an intense magical power obstruction, and he had been using Glam Sight since the start.

Or rather, I admired that his magical power had been kept well until now.

Then, I was concerned about the amount of magic that was charged into the Wand of Urd Sight.

I had already consumed about 60 charges before finding Klaus.

The leftover was about 40 charges.

The Wand of Urd Sight was a wand created from ash tree¹.

The top of the wand was a yellow tourmaline, while the handle part was given a pattern that was weaved in gold.

It was the core material that was distinctive.

Silk weave of 10 meters in length stitched with gold and silver threads.

It was compressed into several millimeters by space magic, it was lightweight and used as a core.

Then, it was necessary to replace the core material when recharging the magic inside a wand.

What was my point?

In other words, this magic was incredibly expensive.

(Edward-oniisama, I'm sorry....!!)

While apologizing in my mind, I opened my bag for the second Wand of Urd Sight. I wondered how many wands would I use overnight. I was afraid of thinking about that for a moment.

¹ Ash is a type of tree. In this story, it refers to *Fraxinus japonica*, or Japanese ash.

Chapter 8

Ruins of Visitor (2)

I handed over a Wand of Urd Sight and one of alchemist's leather gloves to alleviate the reaction of the wands to Klaus.

And for myself, I took out a brand new wand.

"This wand of Aurelia, how do you activate it?"

"To use it, just wave it while saying the spell in your mind."

"It looks like it's surprisingly easy. Is it okay to try it?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

Klaus carefully swung the wand.

The magic of Urd Sight activated safely and white magic circle converged on his eyes.

Klaus looked around while blinking over and over.

His long eyelashes made *pachipachi* sounds as he blinked with vigour as if his eyes dried out.

"...This is useful. I myself didn't consume any magical power at all, I could see you from a few minutes ago."

"Events that had passed over time cannot be pursued by Urd Sight. Keep in mind about what you want to know when you activate it, you should focus on events related to that particular person."

"Do I have to explore while thinking about Ann?"

"That's right. Let's go then."

The lamps in the surroundings were weak because the oxidation of the star crystals were proceeding.

This could make us overlooked the important places.

I searched my bag and took out a lamp.

“Klaus-sama, please also have this lamp.”

“Hm.”

Klaus attached the lamp he got from me to his staff.

When I thought of what he wanted to do, he demonstrated that he could light up high places with his staff.

Ooh, that was great.

...Well, there was no Ann in such a place.

You still somewhat wanted to explore, right? That was not good, you know?

We occasionally swung our wands and walked with two lamps carefully shining on our way home.

“Somehow, I can see the past you were mumbling.”

“Please don’t tease me.”

“Erica... You, are you scared of monsters or ghosts?”

“Klaus-sama, please concentrate on finding your sister”

Klaus looked amused as he turned his line of sight to the front.

I would be in trouble for a while.

Because, right now I was an innocent 8-years-old girl, you know?

Isn’t it okay to be scared of something?

Aah, but if I considered my actual age in the previous life, it was painful to say whether it was okay or not..., ahaha.

“Your mood was terribly suspicious and you had gloomy eyes... Are you really an 8-

years-old child?"

"Hey! Please search for Ann-sama seriously!"

"You, you sometimes have eyes that said you give up on life..."

Eei, I didn't want you to tell me that!

Somehow, Klaus' sensitivity increased until it almost felt like he had a penetrating gaze¹!

I would hold down what I wanted to say.

Even if Klaus sometimes seemed he had the tendency of a small animal, when it came to it, he could grasp the opponent's weakness and play with it...!

Was this a glimpse of someone who would become a Do-S character in the future?!

No, no, now I had to focus on searching for Ann!

"Klaus-sama, have you seen the back of Ann-sama yet?"

"No, I can't see anything about Ann yet. For now, I have only caught on to you in my Urd Sight."

"Are you keeping in mind properly about your sister?"

"Oh, I definitely think about her. Even so I can only see you, it's annoying."

This, this guy...!!

No, no, no, this was not the time for such a thing.

"Did you really see Ann? There is no trace that she ever went through here before."

—H-huh?

Just now, I felt like there was something weird.

"...Hey, Klaus-sama, could you please show me the place of the spell card that you installed for Auto-mapping?"

“Oh, I remember... The spell card in this room is...”

Klaus ran to the corner of the room and looked around the wall.

Oh, he seemed to have some trouble.

He walked around while lighting the walls many times and then returned with a strange expression.

“It’s not here.”

“Really?”

“What does it mean? I’m certain that I put it there... It’s strange, this is—”

He was not wrong.

I didn’t remember it very clearly, but I remembered seeing an unused spell card around the area he was looking at.

But now that spell card didn’t exist.

—I got a bad feeling.

“This Ruins of Visitor, seems to be moving the rooms and passages, it’s probably not magic, but mechanical.”

At that time, I heard a bad sound.

It sounded somewhere in this ruins.

“A mechanical labyrinth...!”

“I have heard from my father that it was a kind of mechanism that the ancient Aurelia people used to avoid thieves, but I never thought that there is a mechanical labyrinth in such a large building.”

Along with the tremendously loud sound of moving mechanism, our feet shook unnaturally.

It was not an earthquake.

Right now, the room where Klaus and I stood was moving.

“...You saw Ann and I went out of the transfer gate.”

“Yes.”

“Did you see Ann that one time in the first room?”

“Yes.”

Klaus wrinkled across his brow,

Sharp eyes stared at me.

“When I passed through and when you chased me, it was probably the same passage, but when Ann passed through, that passage was connected to another place.”

“That’s probably right.”

“And now, too, the trick of the labyrinth has started, and we lost our present position... That’s how it is, Erica.”

“Yes. In this way, there is no guarantee that we can go back to the transfer gate.”

We lost the clues to find Ann and also lost the way to return to the Spring Palace.

The mummy hunter himself became a mummy².

We intended to find a lost child, but now we became lost children.

We were too late in noticing it, and everything else might had been lost.

“You’re quite calm.”

“Of course? I will act flustered when I feel flustered.”

“Well, aren’t you cheeky.”

The thing I most worried about now was Ann.

I was calm because we were still together.

A small girl was wandering around alone in this dimly lit Ruins of Visitor.

Just thinking about it, I felt my heart squeezed tight.

Besides, if she had already been touched by an ancient evil spirit—

No, I had to stop the pessimistic thoughts right now.

Look for Ann, return to the original place, I only had to think about these two.

However, I felt stuck in this search.

Waiting for the night to come like this, wouldn't father and Duke of Harvan notice and send a search party?

—No.

If that happened, Ann would die according to the original game.

Because my relationship with her was changing, I didn't know if she would kill me six years later.

However, no matter how much death flags were broken, I didn't want such a thing to happen.

I didn't want to give up on the life of a young girl I had become emotionally attached to.

“If we move thoughtlessly, things will likely become worse.”

“There should be something we can do. Let's think together for a little while, Klaus-sama.”

I spread my leather bag on the floor.

What can we do with what we have right now? We had to check the means that could be taken.

“You have brought so much.”

“I don't know what will happen, because it is said that there is no feeling of grief if you are prepared.”

Was there any magic that could break through our current situation?

I turned over the box of wands and checked the label.

“...Wand of Grease? It’s a magic to improve slippage. If you put it on your opponent’s hand, their hand would slip and they wouldn’t be able to grasp anything. But what are you going to use in this labyrinth? Something like a niche magic.”

“Because I was in a hurry, I packed it noncommittally!”

Klaus looked into the bag curiously and started picking out items together with me.

“There is no convenient wand that will turn this situation around in one shot. It’s difficult, huh. At most if the wide area search magic is effective.”

“Please blame that matter towards my vigilant ancestors.”

Klaus also carefully read the labels, but it seemed that the idea was not readily apparent.

But I couldn’t give up yet.

When I was persistently searching my leather bag, a weak light that was different from the star crystal lamp came from the deepest part.

“This is Moonlight Gallnut Ink, huh.”

“Ah, I often use it back in Harvan.”

There was a mineral particular to the eastern Harvan region called moonlight ore.

It began to shine faintly as the moon rises, and lost its radiance with the moonset.

When clouds shaded the moon, the moonlight ore became shaded as well.

It was such a strange stone.

Since ancient time, the eastern mages utilized the characteristic of the moonlight ore, that was specialized to respond to the moon, to make Moonlight Gallnut Ink.

“The moon rise... right now it's roughly 20 o'clock.”

In the ink bottle, a bluish yellow light that was permeated was swaying gently.
It was a much weaker light compared to a star crystal lamp.
The night sky tonight was cloudy.

“Klaus-sama, this is...”

I covered my star crystal lamp and gazed at the moonlight ore's light, I noticed something.

Pale light of the same color as the ink was also shining on the walls of the room.
Moreover, it was blinking repeatedly at the same timing as the ink.

“You also noticed?”

“Well, it is as sparkling as the ink, isn't it?”

Perhaps the intensity of the light was linked to the flow of thin clouds that shaded the moon.

I noticed that it was such a weather.

I put the lamp into my leather bag, and Klaus covered his lamp that was attached on the tip of his staff with the sleeve of his robe.

Because the strong lights were blocked, the faint light of the characters drawn on the wall was emphasized and emerged.

What was drawn on the wall was a crescent moon mark.

And under the mark was a familiar handwriting—

It was a message left by senior explorers who had challenged this labyrinth.
What the golden moonlight illumination revealed was truly a bright light³.

¹ Actually it said レイプ目 (rape gaze), but I think it's inappropriate, so I changed it to penetrating gaze.

² An idiomatic expression, means: intending to persuade someone and instead being persuaded himself. Or, a person who went to bring the person to his side will instead stay on the other side.

³ Bright light here means hope, but the author made it a pun, so I keep it as it is.

About the Auto-mapping, so Klaus installed spell cards en route (the one Erica found in chapter 6). They are used to mark the places where he goes through, and when he activated the spell, they supposedly will create a map in the parchment he has in the previous chapter. But, since there is a trap that invalidated wide area magic, the spell cards were found by Erica in a state of unused/inactive.

About the Moonlight Gallnut Ink, if the moon rose, the ink would shine yellow/golden light. If the moon was shaded, it would shine bluish yellow light just like in this chapter. It depends on the current state of the moon, so even if it was indoor, as long as the moon has risen, the ink would shine.

Chapter 9

Ruins of Visitor (3)

“Pass under the crescent moon gate and look for the twin half-moon’...?”

“This is... it’s the handwriting of Edward-oniisama.”

“It’s that guy’s handwriting!?”

I found a trace of Edward-oniisama in the Ruins of Visitor and I felt relieved.

It was the feeling of finding Buddha in hell.

Onii-sama, who was wearing an archaic smile in my mind, was waving his hand sweetly.

“It might be some hint that Onii-sama left when he explored this ruins.”

“Now then, let’s follow this.”

“I agree.”

I packed up my box of wands that was spread on the floor and other tools in my bag and stood up.

According to the message, we needed to go through the exit where the mark of the crescent moon was drawn in the arch part.

As we went through a dark passage for about 30 meters, the light of Moonlight Gallnut Ink came into our sight.

Two semicircular signs were arranged side by side.

This had to be the twin half-moon.

“This...!?”

“Wait, something is also written on it.”

“When the full moon rises high in the sky, the road will open’...”

“Full moon? But, I don’t see a circle mark anywhere...?”

“Wait. There is the word ‘*rises*’ in the message. That means—”

Again, the heavy machine sound resonated.

The shape of the room had changed nearby.

“This hint, is it supposed to be written assuming that the labyrinth will move?”

“That means, that sound means that the full moon has risen some time ago – in other words, it was a sound that leads to the room where the next hint was written.”

“Ah. That’s right. The sky... If the moon has risen to the highest position, the direction to go is south¹. ”

“Oh no. I didn’t bring a compass with me.”

“Leave it to me. While it is impossible to use high tier magic and large area magic due to the consumption of magical power, I can still use magic of this degree.

Klaus was chanting wholeheartedly while holding the wand perpendicular to the floor.

The language he used was the same ancient language of Harvan, but unlike the magical chant he normally used, it was a nursery rhyme.

When he released his hand from the wand as he finished his song, the wand turned around and fell down towards the direction where we just came from.

“This direction is south.”

“It’s somewhat plain.”

“Because it is. But it’s unexpectedly convenient to remember this kind of thing.”

Certainly, it was of great use.

Without this strange thing, I seriously thought of whether I should extract a magnet from the core material or not.

Because of Klaus’ knowledge, the wallet of Edward-oniisama was saved.

My older brother’s hint implicitly told us that in addition to the passage of time, our

moving weight was also a condition for the labyrinth's mechanism to change its shape. If at first we searched with two groups, I might not be able to rejoin with Klaus.

Holding hands with Klaus so that we wouldn't get separated, we moved toward the south through the dimly lit ruins.

While checking with our lamps at some places, we searched carefully.

After a while, I saw a glowing round light emerging in the darkness.

"A circular mark... that is the full moon!"

"Looking at the distance, is there any message?"

"Is this the end point?"

"What was your brother doing in this place?"

At the entrance where the sign of the full moon was drawn, a brand new wooden door was set up.

Fortunately, the door was not locked.

While slowly watching for signs of movement beyond this door, we slowly opened the door.

"This is..."

"A box... is it?"

In the room with the full moon mark, five large storage boxes were placed.

Each storage box was made to be sturdy by being reinforced with a metal frame and they were supposed to be locked.

If they were placed in a ruin like this, they looked like treasure boxes.

Each storage box was carved with a crest of Aurelia.

On the attached labels, there were notes with Onii-sama's handwriting.

Apparently, the inside of the boxes seemed to be items that Onii-sama kept for exploring the labyrinth.

There were two rolls of blankets on the side of the boxes, and there were traces of fire as well.

“Is this a simple base camp?”

“Thoroughly prepared, huh. It sounds like my older brother.”

“There may be items that can be used.”

“If so, it can’t be helped.”

I tried to open the storage box, but all of them were locked tightly.

It was really carefully prepared, it certainly seemed to be Edward-oniisama.

“Klaus-sama, unfortunately, I didn’t bring a Wand of Skeleton Key²...”

“Don’t worry. Somehow, my magical power has recovered enough to use the magic of Unlock.”

“Well then, please.”

“Oh, leave it to me.”

Klaus put his staff on the box and cast a spell.

Unlike our wands, the staffs used by the eastern mages served as a magical amplifier. But, for a mage of Klaus’ degree to use a staff for a basic spell, wasn’t that a little excessive?

Light-red light magic circle appeared as if wrapping the storage box.

The magic circle slowly rotated and shrunk down, converging on the lock part.

Click, and with that sound, the lock opened.

“Okay, I guess you can open it now.”

“Let’s open it, Klaus-sama.”

“Ah.”

Klaus opened the heavy lid of the clothing box.

I shone it with a lamp, I saw a number of items.

“Some scrolls and food, yeah, this is nice, we’re saved.”

“Does it have something that looks useful?”

“Look, it’s a magical recovery potion.”

Small bottles of candy colored glasses that contained potions were arranged in order.

As expected of Edward-oniisama!

“If we have these, I don’t have to depend on your wand. I will be able to do more in our search.”

“Sounds helpful.”

Huh? Alchemists shouldn’t have to worry about running out of magical power.

Why did Edward-oniisama keep so many potions for magical recovery?

For the companion who accompanied him...?

Onii-sama’s friend, I wondered if he was from Harvan or Lucanrant.

Oops, now was the time to confirm the rest of the items.

After he opened one with the potions, Klaus was unlocking the rest of the boxes one after another.

He had recovered his magical power, and now he was in a perfect condition, like a fish that got water.

Aah! Four boxes had been opened while I was day dreaming!

“I will open this box.”

I was going to open the last box.

—GING!

The light protection pattern that had been embroidered on the hem of my older brother's clothes enveloped every thread with special magical power.

At the same time as opening the lid, a vast purple magic circle was spreading.

Hii! This was obviously a kind of curse.

I tried to avoid it quickly, but faster than I reacted, the light of the magic circle broke like a chain and entangled me.

“...Eh!?”

“...!! This is bad! A trap!”

(Why does it—!?)

That's right~~!

If you left behind a baggage full of items in a dungeon, you would take measures against thieves!

This, the death flag was quite serious and dangerous!?

This was painful...!

Klaus cast Glam Sight and stared at me.

He was confirming the details of the curse that I was given.

His eyes shook, and blood drained from his head as he stared at me.

When Klaus finished analysing the curse, he turned down his eyes as if mourning.

Uwa! That was a reaction like a doctor who would announce an incurable disease!

“...Sorry, Erica. This is... the curse of death.”

Hii, as expected!

Many of Aurelia's people had a strong pride in their craftsmanship.

So, most alchemists were strict toward thieves...

“...This is the work of Edward-oniisama, right?”

“Ah. The creator is Edward Aurelia, your older brother, it was made about a month ago.”

Klaus' facial expression was dark, he wouldn't look into my eyes and his eyebrows were furrowed.

Anyway, was I going to die, right now!?

“Curse of Merciful Death... After a certain period of time, even without suffering, it will bring death promptly.”

“Eh, after a certain amount of time...?”

“Estimated to be a little more than eight hours and less than twelve hours.”

“...Eh!?”

“It is to give some moral suffering to the victim, huh. Or maybe there is an intention of dispelling it if the victim was begging for forgiveness.”

You were a devil, Edward-oniisama.

As expected from someone with the infamous dark smile among the seven capture targets, the retribution was very dark...!!

I was always feeling refreshed by looking at my friendly older brother's gentle and sweet side.

It was too regrettable that I hadn't played Onii-sama's scenario yet—

“...Erica, are you okay?”

“Yes, I'm okay.”

For a moment, it seemed that I had been escaping reality, but I returned to see Klaus' worried face.

“Erica, let's return. There is still time to go to the palace. Your father would be able to resolve it.”

“No, let’s give priority to your sister now.”

I decided to bear it.

Even if it didn’t have monsters or ghosts, this Ruins of Visitor was dangerous enough.

There was no guarantee that Onii-sama and other explorers hadn’t set any other deadly traps.

I couldn’t leave the young Ann in such a place.

Generally, I was accustomed to severe experiences.

I didn’t want to get used to it at all.

In the first place, it was not merely death, but the mercy itself was that I could spare eight hours.

I took out the silver pocket watch out of my coat pocket.

The current time was past 21 o’clock.

“It’s still fine to escape by 5 o’clock tomorrow morning and solve it.”

“What are you talking about! How much can we postpone it, if something happened to you, I—”

“I’m more concerned about your sister”

“But...”

“Let’s stroll around the garden of Spring Palace tomorrow, this time it will be the three of us. Promise me, Klaus-sama.”

It was rude to interrupt other people’s speech, but I had to interrupt him.

If I was seriously worried about it, it would be rather hard for myself.

I smiled at Klaus.

A smile was important.

Even if Erica Aurelia was a villainous lady, would her smile be enough to relieve anxiety?

“You...”

“If there is such a grace, if I don’t have a bad luck, I won’t die.”

“I don’t know, Erica... you look like you have a very bad luck.”

I know, right~.

In the one out of five Russian Roulette treasure chest just a moment ago, I magnificently caught the jackpot!

¹ This is a navigation using the moon location. All celestial objects – sun, stars, planets and moon – arc across the southern sky when viewed from northern latitudes. They all reach their highest point in the sky when they cross your meridian or line of longitude and this will occur when they are exactly due south of you. That’s why, Klaus deduced that the next hint is in the southern direction.

² It is written as Wand of Universal Key. So it is a wand that can unlock everything.

Chapter 10

Ruins of Visitor (4)

“Erica, is there a painful place somewhere?”

“I’m alright, Klaus-sama.”

“I see... Then, do you feel sluggish, cold, or something like that?”

“I’m alright!”

“I see... If you feel somewhat bad, don’t overdo it and say it quickly.”

“Yes, yes. I will tell you.”

We were organizing and sorting the items that were stored in the storage boxes of Edward-oniisama.

I mainly focused on the wands, while Klaus on the scrolls and spell cards.

...It was supposed to be a time for preparations, but Klaus’ hands were stopping frequently.

Every time he stopped, he asked me about my condition.

“Erica, you, are you really...”

“Klaus-sama, I will get angry, you know?”

On his face, a big sign of ‘Worried’ was written.

He resembled Edward-oniisama when I caught a cold.

Both of them had the same eldest son’s color on their soul’s aura.

Onii-sama who had a black-belly dark smile was a good person, similarly, maybe Klaus who would grow up to be a Do-S was also a good person.

“Klaus-sama, how is it?”

“There is no curse in the range of my Glam Sight. These spell cards can be diverted to Harvan’s magic without problem. Wait a little more for the analysis of these scrolls.”

“That’s fortunate. Please don’t forget to restore your magical power by drinking the potion.”

“Ah, I know. What about you, Erica?”

I read the parchment notes about the classified wands.

Wand of the Death¹.

Wand of Fire Bolt.

Wand of Lightning Bolt.

Wand of Magic Missiles.

They all came from the trapped box of death.

Although the remaining amount of usage was few, all of them were powerful offensive wands.

It was not unreasonable for Edward-oniisama to be vigilant about thieves.

“You mean they were Edward’s leftovers?”

“The fact that the offensive wands were used is probably because a fairly large battle had happened.”

“Well, it *was* strange that there were no monsters that would protect the ruins at all, but maybe they were already wiped out?”

“Probably so.”

Yes, the Ruins of Visitor had already been conquered.

In this regard, I would like to thank Onii-sama obediently.

Even though the mechanism of this labyrinth alone was sufficiently troublesome, I shuddered when I thought that a monster would also come out.

“Ooh! I can use this!”

Klaus raised a shout of joy as he was analyzing the scrolls while making constant reference to his personal notebook.

He seemed to be in a good form ever since his magical power was recovered.

I also stopped my hands that were packing items into my bag and looked into the scroll.

“Have you found magic that seems useful?”

“Far better than being useful, it’s not an exaggeration to say that this is a trump card. What is described here is a Pass Wall.”

Klaus showed me the page of the notebook and scrolls, pointing alternately with excitement.

Yup, but you see, I couldn’t read the magic language of the eastern Harvan.

The result of a magical research was written carefully in the notebook.

This was nostalgic, Klaus (older) of the game also carried magical research notes that was as thick as a Japanese dictionary².

With this, he would grow up as a hardworking genius.

“Is it a magic that let you freely passing through the wall? It is also a magical way for labyrinth searchers to cheat.”

“I don’t feel even a bit ashamed, because right now we don’t have enough time anyway.”

Certainly, in the situation that mine and Ann’s life were on the line, we didn’t have time to keep track of the maze of the labyrinth.

But if I thought about this carefully, Onii-sama had always prepared this cheat spell when searching inside a labyrinth.

As expected, Onii-sama... somehow immature.

“So it’s like this, let’s use the large, hateful mechanical labyrinth as an example. If it

was an ordinary labyrinth, we would just have to walk through the walls and walk from one end to the other end.”

“But we don’t understand the laws of the labyrinth, it won’t be strange even if a fatal incidence occurs because we failed to confirm everything.”

In addition to the passage of time, the Ruins of Visitor detected the weight of its intruder and changed its shape.

The message of Edward-oniisama, who explored the ruins first, was not left in every room.

Because there weren’t many hints, it would be unreasonable if we didn’t try to decipher the laws of the changing labyrinth from now on.

“If we don’t understand the rule, at least we should be able to suppress the change of the labyrinth.”

“Time passage, weight... , huh...”

“The manipulation of time is the highest-ranking magic. I memorized about the chants and the magic circle configuration as much as I could, but they place a heavy burden on someone as immature as I am. I have never succeeded even once in casting it.”

“You memorized it, huh. The highest-ranking magic.”

“If it was only memorizing spells, everyone can do it if they try. Once I matured, I would finally be able to practice it.”

No, but even though he was only 10-years-old, he had memorized the highest-ranking magic, I believed that not everyone could do it, you know?

Because this was a genius who had not noticed that he was actually a genius!

Well, but time was impossible anyhow.

Then, the remaining was weight.

Weight, weight, weight... ah!

“Klaus-sama, there is a Wand of Levitation. With this Pass Wall, combined with—”

“I see, a flying-based magic! Then, it’s as good as no mechanical labyrinth!”

Wand of Levitation was made from fossils of a large wyvern.

On the stick head was an amber, and the handle part had yellow brass in a pattern of a feather.

The core material was fossil of the wing of an archaeopteryx.

Incidentally, this was also very expensive, but in this situation I couldn't afford to be frugal.

Unlike flying, it was impossible to finely adjust the height of Levitation.

However, since we only wanted to avoid a mechanical labyrinth, we only needed to float a little from the ground.

Levitation had a weak effect, but it was useful enough.

“Then the next step is decided. Using Levitation in combination with Pass Wall, we will search each layer one by one.”

“If we also combine them with Urd Sight, it seems we will be able to significantly shorten the time.”

“There are two Pass Wall scrolls. I think one piece is for returning, we will return temporarily if we cannot join with Ann before the first piece effect timeout.”

“It can't be helped. In the case that Ann-sama is in a safe place – let's leave a note in various places so that we can guide her to this simple base camp.”

There was a possibility that it might not be noticed at all depending on the weather, if it was only written on the wall with Moonlight Gallnut Ink.

Just by dropping scraps of parchments that squeezed out the instructions on the conspicuous points such as the entrance, the discovery rate would rise significantly.

“Erica, I said this many times, but we will return home as soon as you feel unusual about your condition. No matter how much effect time the Pass Wall scroll has left.”

“Klaus-sama...”

“I am worried about Ann, but if you have any chance to be saved, I will not forgive myself for the rest of my life if you die. If only I looked at the magic trace a bit more carefully, that trap could have been prevented.”

“Klaus-sama has a quite stubborn personality, aren’t you?”

“You...”

I appreciated him for being worried about me.

But it was due to my carelessness that I was caught on a trap.

Because it was burdensome to be taken care of too much, I diverted the topic to miscellaneous things.

Nonetheless, to be honest, I felt glad that Klaus was actively seeking to withdraw.

Was it because I received a sentence of death?

It was a good thing.

—No, no, that was not good at all.

After the confirmation of items was finished, we prepared for our departure.

Klaus wore a belt with a potion holder found from Onii-sama’s storage box around his waist from above his robe.

He hooked the magical recovery potions to all of its special shaped metal fittings.

He drank three potions that couldn’t be fitted on the holder to restore his magical power, the rest would be put into the cloth bag that Klaus had brought with him.

Three potions... he was only 10-years-old, but the maximum value of his magical power was high.

If it was an average adult mage, I heard that their magical power would be fully restored after drinking two and a half potions.

“Wh-what is it? Why are you staring at me like that?”

“No, never mind. If I must say, I’m worried whether your magical power has completely restored or not.”

“I see... Ah, if wide area magic is not hindered, I have enough magical power to run exploration magic on all the layers so far.”

“Klaus-sama, if I look closely your face is red, how is your physical condition?”

“Oh, aah... why is this? Was there also sake in the ingredients of the potion...?”

When Klaus turned toward the other way, he gathered spell cards with great vigour. He was like a banker who counted bills or a magician who shuffled cards! He bundled about 20 sheets of spell cards, and put them into hidden pockets in various parts of his robe.

Hmm? Wait a moment, did he bring hundreds of them?

Even just by glancing at him, it seemed like he had put over 300 sheets in just one sleeve.

“Klaus-sama, no way, are you going to bring all of the spell cards? There are about 2000 sheets, you know?”

“If we go to the deepest layer, there is a possibility that we will come across an unknown monster. By the way, there are less than 2000.”

“Being the mage of the East is a hard work too, huh.”

“We also put an importance in preparation. It is the same as the fundamental of you western alchemists. Unlike the northern swordsmen who can fight with each other, or the southern dragon knights who are unbeatable as long as they have dragons.”

“Considering all that, you still came to this ruins without preparation...”

“Because, at that time I was weird. No, I reflect on it. I will never do something like this without preparation again.”

It was harsh that he was feeling ashamed about it.

His behavior was due to the curse of the vampire (?)³, so I didn't mean to blame him.

I fastened the lamp that tends to block my hand on the bag, and wrapped the belt that had the wand holder around my waist.

It only barely caught around my waist, as expected it was truly a belt for Onii-sama.

I picked up the two wands of Magic Missiles and Lightning Bolt from the offensive wands, and the three wands of Levitation, Feather Falling, and Urd Sight among the wands for convenience, and put them in the holder.

Too many would just bring confusion and couldn't be used.

It was the theory of alchemists' way of fighting, to insert a reasonable number of

wands into the belt and exchanged them alternately with the wands inside the bag as occasion demands.

...Edward-oniisama was selling out.

"Ah, right. Klaus-sama take these too, please. These are the Wand of Levitation and Feather Falling... In other words, they are for flying and falling. Because these two have a short range, please do self-management to the best of your ability during the move."

"I understand the Levitation, but when would we use the Wand of Feather Falling?"

"This is important. We can't say that there would be no such thing like pitfall, and it can also be used when we float too high. Because Levitation has a high altitude rise, it often happens if you swing it too many times by mistake."

"How high is it specifically?"

"Usually around 5 cm. 25 cm when you swing it once more. And 125 cm if you swing it again. The altitude will rise exponentially with each swing."

"Huh. That's interesting."

Ah, 10-years-old and he already understood the exponential function.

As expected, he was the hardworking genius, Klaus Harvan.

Although there was also a possibility that he would float away appropriately.

Let's take care that he wouldn't overswing the Wand of Levitation.

"Let's go, Erica. From here it's a race against time."

"Yes, Klaus-sama. Let's help Ann-sama as soon as possible."

Klaus read aloud the scroll of Pass Wall.

White light spread out from his staff and spread a magic circle over us.

From the magic circle overhead, drops of light came down like raindrops.

The drops of light which passed through us, spread like a ripple when it fell to the ground and formed another magic circle.

The two magic circles intersected slowly so as to sandwich us and the trajectory of white light enveloped us.

After confirming the invocation of Pass Wall, I swung the Wand of Levitation which was made of amber, bone, and brass, twice.

Feathers made of golden lights fell to our feet.

Light touched our shoes, and when it touched our shoes, it changed into a golden magic circle.

The magic circle of Levitation spread as if covering our shoes, pushing our body up in the air.

As we held hands so that none of us would get stuck in the wall, we kicked in the air and jumped into the wall.

¹ The literal translation is actually Wand of the Armor of Death.

² It actually said 広○苑, but I know that it refers to 広辞苑 (Koujien) or a Japanese dictionary written by Shinmura Izuru. For reference, it is this size. So, Klaus (older)'s research journal is very thick.

³ This question mark is in the raw. This is because Erica still wasn't sure that the magic spelled on the stone was from the vampires. It was still pure speculation.

Chapter 11

Ruins of Visitor (5)

It was my first time to experience Pass Wall.

So, my body penetrated the wall, and the feeling of passing through the wall was an unknown and incomprehensible sensation—

No, wait... There was something similar to this sensation, what was it?

The memory of my previous life revived in my mind.

At a very common tavern and a bento shop, I experienced a sensation similar to this magic.

(—Oh, it is a short curtain¹.)

Should it be said that it was a sensation of going through a lot of whole-sized curtains in a passage of about three meters.

There was an approximate experience where I didn't expect it.

(What exactly is fantasy... Ah, but this is surprisingly fun.)

The effect time of Levitation was sufficient.

The sign for the end of the effect was that the diameter of the magic circle around our foot had become about half the size.

Before the magic circle stopped supporting our body, I swung the wand again.

“Perhaps, isn’t it better for us to exit the Ruins of Visitor by passing through the walls, so that we wouldn’t use too many wands?”

“It’s risky.”

“Why?”

“Outside of the Ruins of Visitor are considerably thick rocks. If we made a mistake in estimating the depth and couldn’t pass through the rocks during the effect time...”

“We would be squeezed inside the rocks. That’s wretched.”

“It is. Moreover, even if we successfully passed through the rocks, the outside of the Ruins of Visitor is mostly the sea. If our escape angle is wrong...”

“We would drown. That’s wretched.”

“It is. I don’t want to increase any more bizarre cause of deaths.”

“More what?”

“Oops! About this. Please don’t mind it.”

“Erica, you...”

I looked away in a hurry.

I was about to carelessly mouth off the collection of bizarre deaths of Erica, the villainous lady.

He wouldn’t understand my previous life knowledge in every sense.

It should rather be left unsaid that there was a story in the game about what happens when you failed at teleporting².

Somehow, from Klaus, I felt like I was being seen with eyes like watching a painful child.

...Harsh.

With such a situation, we had explored each layer at ultra-high speed even when there were trivial and personal failures.

While we were exploring using the Pass Wall, Ann finally began to appear in Urd Sight. They were nothing more than images of a time that had passed.

Even if we tried to follow her past footprints, we would be obstructed by the wall immediately because of the labyrinth which had already changed.

However, it seemed that some of Klaus’ worry eased a little.

Thanks to the confirmation of Ann’s moving figure.

I wanted to meet the real Ann quickly.

When I thought about the sad future where those siblings would be separated by death, my heart felt painful.

“Wait, Erica. There is something.”

We were about two layers down from where the simple base camp was.

Klaus extended his hands to shield me and glared at the end of the passage.

“Eh...”

“Sounds of something being dragged on the floor shake the air slightly. I wonder if it was a monster or a beast that broke away from your older brother.”

Eh, a monster?

Wait a moment, I had been preparing for a battle, but my heart wasn’t ready yet for the actual battle.

If I listened carefully, I could hear faint fricative sounds were steadily getting closer.
Should we run away?

“Don’t make a sudden move. Stay behind me.”

“Oh, yes.”

Klaus kept me behind his back and held his staff at the height of his waist.

What should I do, I had to help him. What wand should I use?

Offensive wands were on the right side of the belt... Aah, I didn’t take out the Wand of Hold!

“Don’t push yourself. Be ready to escape at any time.”

“Eh, but-”

“It is a man’s job to protect a woman. Your job is to calm down by taking a deep breath. On the battlefield, a friend who is panicking is scarier than the enemy.”

“Fuh... haah... Klaus-sama is calm, aren’t you?”

“I’m undergoing combat training and I’ve accompanied my father in hunting and deadly extermination.”

So the duke and his son went directly to get rid of evil spirits, huh.

In the ancient royal family era, there was a story that said Harvan of the East was also the highest priest of the indigenous Sun God.

We saw a shadow of something wriggling in the passage corner.

Klaus quickly got two spell cards from his bosom with his left hand and threw them toward the shadow and cast a few words of spell quickly.

The thrown spell cards flew while expanding a magic circle, bursting open mid-air and emitted bright white lights.

Light hit the upper right corner and the lower left corner of the passage – and diagonally shone the true form of the shadow.

“—A flock of moving bones!? And moreover, this number is...”

Various types of beasts bones were grouping together while being suspended mid-air.

How many? Several tens of heads?

Lots of bone chunks that couldn’t be counted were filling up the passage and drew near in a surge.

That was the identity of what was illuminated by the magic of Light.

“They have enough Magic Resist to trick my Glam Sight... No, they are monsters with magical structures that I don’t recognize... , no, what are those!?”

“Klaus-sama...”

“Listen to me. When I give you a sign, run away and don’t look back. If you keep going straight using Levitation and Pass Wall, there should be a valid exit.”

Tension ran on the face of Klaus.

After glancing towards me, he pulled out a bundle of hundreds of spell cards from his

sleeve at once.

No matter how much battle experience he had, no matter how much of a future genius mage he was, if those bones were undeads it would be inevitable—.

In fact, if we encountered such a huge number of undeads, it was a crisis of death.

—However, looking at those figures, on the contrary, I was relieved.

“Klaus-sama, it’s alright.”

“What!?”

“That is the cleaning automaton that my older brother made, an acid hydrogel golem.”

“—Ha!?”

Those were not undeads.

The large amount of bones was floating inside a golem made of translucent jelly-like substances.

Unlike the regular golem, he was not humanoid but a cube.

He spread his flexible body all the way into the passage and performed cleaning by swallowing up every garbage without exception.

A few days before regaining memories of my previous life, I had seen prototypes of this in Onii-sama’s room.

It was an appearance like an apple jelly that moved.

I thought it was convenient, but I never thought that the real golem was so huge...

As expected, Onii-sama... it was on a different scale...

“The inside is strong acid, but the outside is made of gel. It’s said that it is a smart and safely designed golem that swallowed only carcasses and the expensive materials are protected with neutral ingredients.”

“Why!! Why does your older brother put such a thing inside the labyrinth!?”

“Because of the cleaning... Because there were so many monsters’ dead bodies, I think that the golem cleaned up bone remains to collect materials for alchemy.”

“Eei! That’s so confusing!!”

That was exactly right.

But, that was something you should tell Onii-sama directly, not me.

Oops, I remembered important things.

“Ah, but, if we penetrated into him in this Pass Wall state, we would be killed instantly by the strong acid without being stopped by the outer shell.”

“Kuh, Edward Aurelia...!!”

“We may as well stop exploring for now.”

Edward-oniisama himself was a nice, gentle person.

But regarding alchemy he had no mercy and would never go easy on other people, without that dangerous flaw he was a perfect person.

If we kept going without noticing, would the white bones of me and Klaus also float over there?

Wait a minute, I just noticed it now but were my death flags all caused by Onii-sama?

The star crystal necklace.

A trap of death set in a storage box.

And now the acid golem and Pass Wall scroll combo.

“Is everything okay, Erica, your eyes seem dead...?”

“Oh, I’m alright, Klaus-sama.”

That was not good, I was about to get caught up in the darkness of my mind.

I actually began to doubt whether the gentle Edward-oniisama was trying to kill me.

Let’s put some more trust in other people, me.

Well, let’s keep going and stop the golem.

If it was an ordinary golem made of earth, stone or metal, it would be difficult unless

I was the maker.

However, if it was a slow-moving golem made from translucent gel, I could stop it.

First of all, proceed to the front of the moving golem while trembling, observed his interior while holding a lamp.

By using Glam Sight, I quickly discovered the core of the golem – a shard engraved with activated spells – among the countless bones.

With this, I should be able to stop the movement of the golem.

Huh? Near the shard, there was something floating—

“Klaus-sama, there is something familiar floating in the body of the golem.”

“What do you recognize?”

“That, over there, doesn’t it look like Ann-sama’s hair pin?”

Klaus stared at a certain point about one-meter high.

What was floating there was a white material... It was probably an object made of porcelain or bone.

The metal pin seemed to have melted, but the characteristic petal-like decoration remained intact.

“...!!”

“Klaus-sama. It’s alright. Ann-sama shouldn’t be using the scroll of Pass Wall.”

Klaus tightly clasped the heart part of his clothes.

He wore a painfully sad expression.

“Ann-sama is not inside. Surely, the golem was just picking up what Ann-sama has dropped.”

“Oh, yeah... I didn’t see anything that seems like human remains. I know that. I’m fine.”

That said, he looked much paler than when we thought we were going to battle strong

undeads.

He didn't seem to be alright.

Although he was jumping to a wrong conclusion for certain, it was impossible not to be affected when it had something to do with the life and death of a blood relative.

Klaus was also a 10-years-old child, although he was getting stronger.

The stress that was received by his mind was immeasurable.

I hoped this clue successfully leads us to Ann.

“The acid may splash, let's step back a little.”

While retreating, I took a Wand of Mage Fingers from my leather bag.

The Wand of Mage Fingers was made of yew.

At the end of the wand was an opal, and the handle was golden with a pattern of spider's nest and legs.

The core material was the foot of a giant spider³.

A little magic circle in the rainbow color surrounded the five fingers of my right hand like a ring after I shook the wand with my left hand.

It was visible through the Glam Sight that the Mage Fingers made with magical power were formed inside the golem.

I tried to open and close my right hand.

—Alright, it moved.

The Mage Fingers were opening and closing following the movement of my right hand.

If I could reach the core, stopping the golem was a simple work.

Moved the Mage Fingers and grabbed the shard.

From the characters of *emet* engraved there, I scraped one character with Mage Fingers and changed it to *met*.⁴

Soon the golem broke its shape like a boiling hot water and melted into the ground.

“I see, the death of an automaton.”

Klaus said with a strange expression.

Certainly, if you lived in the East, it might be hard to see the collapse of the golem.

Rainbow colored magic circle on my right hand immediately gone.

That was because of my emphasis on scraping the characters on the golem.

Because of this delicacy, Mage Fingers could only be used for fine work.

The hundreds of beasts bones that were swallowed by the golem, the core of the golem, and the hair ornament were falling.

I washed away the acid that adhered, and picked up the core of the golem.

I had to return this to Onii-sama.

Klaus too, he picked up the hair ornament that seemed to be Ann's.

It was a pretty hair ornament that imitate the flowers of eastern country with elaborate workmanship.

“I certainly remember this. The material also made of the horn of a unicorn that lived in the Harvan's forest. I have no doubt that this is Ann's.”

“Then, Ann-sama passed by this point, wasn't she?”

However, as soon as we were ten meters beyond the turning point we met a dead end.

Both of us swung the Wand of Urd Sight.

I could see Ann Harvan's back walking towards the end of the dead end.

She noticed something and expressed a startle, then she started to run.

Maybe because she was in a hurry, Ann didn't notice that her hair ornament had fallen.

I was certain that she saw the bones masses inside the golem.

A sigh of relief from Klaus was heard nearby.

“I have a feeling that we have neared Ann-sama, but the labyrinth is changing.”

“It’s okay. Since we know the direction, we could use Pass Wall.”

“Yes, Klaus-sama, let’s chase after her.”

There was some margin in the effective time of the first Pass Wall scroll.

If we could join with Ann quickly, the three of us could escape together with the second scroll.

At least, we should catch up with her soon before the encounter with the sealed ancient evil spirit in the bottom layer!

We used Levitation, kicked off the air quietly and ran to the direction of Ann.

¹ 暖簾 (noren) is short curtain hung at shop entrances, or split curtain used to divide spaces in a house in Japan.

² I don't really understand this sentence: テレポートに失敗するといしのなかに入ってしまうあのゲームの話なんて、言わずもがなだ。 but I think it's referring to a game called Wizardry, where there is a teleporter's trap which sent the party into a wall and caused instant death for the party.

³ Giant spider (大蜘蛛) here is the alternative name for Tsuchigumo, the name for a race of spider-like youkai in Japanese folklore.

⁴ In Jewish folklore, a golem is inscribed with Hebrew words on its forehead, such as the word *emet* (אמת, “truth” in Hebrew). The golem could then be deactivated by removing the aleph (א) in *emet*, thus changing the inscription from “truth” to “death” (*met* מת, meaning “dead”).

Chapter 12

Ruins of Visitor (6)

We went down the stairs following the past Ann that we saw using Urd Sight.
This was the eighth layer.
How far would we go down?

We went down to the next layer as usual, starting from the unchanging staircase.
However, the scene ahead was completely different from what we had seen in Ruins of Visitor so far.

It was full of the scent of death.

When we arrived, dead bodies of unfamiliar creatures were scattered about everywhere.
Blood covered beasts, chopped reptiles, crushed huge bugs.
Multipod monsters that had become charred, plenty of chopped meat—

I felt dizzy.

It was fortunate that we had not been exposed to such bad odor, as they had been subjected to simple preservation treatment.

There was no animal I recognized among the corpses, and it was fortunate that all the other monsters had irregular shapes.

Otherwise, I might not have been able to suppress the nausea.

Two filters, olfaction and vision, changed the scenery into an impression like seeing a game or a realistic movie.

You were useful in unexpected places, game brain.

Those thoughts were making myself smile unexpectedly in spite of the nauseating

scene, keeping my mind from panicking.

“Uh... , are you alright, Erica?”

“I’m not alright, but I will be fine. What about Klaus-sama?”

“I’m familiar with this kind of scenery. See, going to the same places with my father, getting rid of monsters...”

“Your speech is becoming messy, Klaus-sama.”

It was nice to have a conversation with a friend.

Shocking videos, too, were surprisingly less damaging when you watch them with other people.

But that meant the person who saw this alone was taking it harder than us—

“Let’s hurry. Ann should be there.”

“Yes. I’m sure she would find it hard to feel fine.”

Most of the pillars were knocked down, large holes were opened all over the walls.

Mechanism of huge gears to move the labyrinth was exposed, and there were also damaged parts.

It was a trace where the power of terrible destruction was demonstrated.

“This is why your older brother accumulated so much money.”

“These monsters were his opponents, huh.”

“Although I intended to be armed perfectly when we left the simple base camp... I feel frightened when I think that all these carcasses were living and moving.”

When Klaus said that, shivers also ran over my spine.

What if the group of Edward-oniisama had not wiped out these monsters?

I didn’t know what would happen to the three of us.

The reason why the Ruins of Visitor was said to be the most dangerous area in Aurelia

territory was finally felt by our skin.

How long had we been walking around?

Thanks to the creepy mountains of carcasses, I felt like it was longer than the actual search time.

It felt like Edward-oniisama had guided us toward this situation.

We stopped in front of a room.

At the entrance of the room, there was a message written by Moonlight Gallnut Ink.

“Do not step on the stars. Otherwise’...huh? It disappears?”

“It seems that there is a thick cloud right now. The first row was ‘*Do not step on the stars*’, wasn’t it?”

“It seems that way, but...”

“I don’t know what will happen if we step on it, but I haven’t seen the mark of stars yet in this layer, so I think we’re safe for now.”

With Onii-sama’s note, this kind of warning was the first time, so I felt a bit nervous.

When going in and out of the room, we might have to observe carefully whether there was a mark of a star in the state of not emitting light.

In addition, since the Levitation effect time was almost over, we should swing the wand...

When I thought about such a thing, Klaus suddenly crouched on the spot and started to investigate something.

“Klaus-sama, is it a mark of a star?”

“No, it’s not... This is the eastern spell card. Magic of Alarm¹ that narrowed the range and increased accuracy... That’s how this spell works.”

Klaus suddenly stood up, stepping over the spot where the spell was cast, and took a step into the room.

“...Ann! Are you there!?”

It was a room with relatively few traces of destruction.

A small girl was crouching and trembling at the other side of Klaus.

She noticed us and raised her face.

Oh, good... we came in time...!

“...Klaus-oniisama?... Erica-sama!?”

The lamp attached to the end of the staff illuminated the little girl who looks like Klaus.

Ann Harvan's face was ghastly pale with fatigue and fear.

I could see how hard this had been for her, just by looking at her face.

There were traces of tears tracks on Ann's cheeks.

But the tears that flowed down her cheeks now were different from other tears.

Klaus ran to Ann and hugged her.

Ann also hugged Klaus back.

“Onii-sama... Onii-sama!... Onii-sama, you idiot!”

“...It was bad. I was bad. Ann, I caused you a bitter hardship.”

“I was lonely... I was really scared, you know...?”

“Aah, I'm really sorry.”

It was probably because Ann's tension thread broke after she joined Klaus.

She burst into tears with a loud voice.

Klaus gently stroked Ann's head with a gentle face that I had never seen before.

While being stroked, Ann returned it with a warm-hearted punch like a spoiled child.

“I'm glad you're okay... I was worried all the time.”

“Mou... mou... that's my line. You're bothering Erica-sama!”

“Aah, it's all my fault. Ann, did you come to such dangerous ruins in order to stop me?”

“—Eh?”

“...Hm?”

“Ah—, yes. That's right. I tried to bring you back without telling Otoou-sama. Please appreciate it.”

“I see. You used your mind...”

Ann... your eyes were swimming...

That's right. I felt that way from the very beginning.

If it was only to stop Klaus, she could stop him when he used the sleeping magic.

As we talked about it during the dinner party, I wondered if her interest in the ruins came to her at that time.

These people were really siblings.

Once she finished crying, Ann left Klaus.

She wiped away her tears, stretched her spine and faced me.

“Erica-sama, I'm sorry for having caused you trouble.”

“I'm glad, Ann-sama. You are okay, I'm really glad.”

“Erica-sama...”

I cleaned the face of Ann who had fallen apart again with a beautiful handkerchief.

Her expression, it changed to the same smile as when I saw it in Knot Garden.

With this, I was finally at ease.

(I had a bad feeling when we arrived at this layer, but it seems to end in peace safely～～!!)

If the three of us could escape from this Ruins of Visitor, the death flag would have been successfully avoided–!

After this, it was a simple task of simply using the Pass Wall while rising up with Levitation, going through the transfer gate, and then sleep.

Aah, there was also a sermon by Oto-sama before going to bed... but compared with the fate of the death event that was waiting six years in the future, it was overwhelmingly better!

Klaus took out the magical recovery potions and let her drink it.

Ann also lost most of her magical power while searching the ruins.

Rather, it was amazing that she kept her magical power so far by herself.

The fact that her precision magic was better than wide area magic, was compatible with the characteristics of the labyrinth.

Now then, the excursion was an excursion until we went home.

It slipped through my mind now that we had joined with Ann, but I didn't know what would happen on our way home.

First of all, until Ann could move, we would rest in this room—

“Hmm?”

Since a little while ago, I thought that the moving sounds of the mechanical labyrinth would be done.

This sound was the sound that I heard frequently since entering the Ruins of Visitor.

Therefore, I got used to it, and it was kept away from my consciousness.

But, somehow, wasn't it too long?

I looked back to the way where we came from.

There was no particular change.

However, there were ruins devastated by battle and many dead bodies.

“What's wrong, Erica?”

“No... somehow, I feel like there is something wrong...”

Far from stopping, the moving sounds were growing louder and louder.
Somehow, I felt like it was getting closer.

“By the way, Onii-sama, Erica-sama – I have been worried for a long time, but what is that?”

“That?”

“Yes. I think that it is Moonlight Gallnut Ink...”

“Ha!? Erica! Hide the lamp!”

Klaus looked at the direction pointed by Ann, shouting like in a hurry.
He covered the lamp attached to his staff with the sleeve of his robe.
I also imitated him and put the lamp in my bag.

—Indeed, in the outside world the clouds that were covering the moon seemed to have cleared up.

A light bluish golden light shone on the whole floor of the room.
We were standing above the starry sky drawn with Moonlight Gallnut Ink.
In my mind, the warning message written at the entrance came to my mind.
Do not step on the stars. Otherwise— Otherwise, what would happen?

Fearfully, I shifted my shoes.
There was a mark of a star in the place where my shoes had stepped on.
Uwah, I, I was too lucky!?

“Ann! Erica! Hands—!”

The crumbling sound of the stones obstructed Klaus’ cry.
The field of view tilted obliquely.

No, it was the floor of the labyrinth that was inclined.

I could see the hard stone floor swelling like a stormy sea.

Floor, wall, pillar, ceiling—

The layer itself fell as it crumbled.

We were caught up in it and were thrown into the air.

(Uwah, this, in such a place? The three of us finally got it...!)

Ann who was close to Klaus barely caught in his arms.

However, I was watching the reunion of the brother and sister from a little distance away, so I was separated.

While protecting Ann, Klaus had hundreds of spell cards to shape like an umbrella.

It was a Protective Circle to protect themselves from the collapsed debris.

However, they were five meters or more away from me.

A trap of wide area magic interference – if that was the case, the Protective Circle wouldn't reach me!

Uwah, what should I do!

“Calm down, Erica! The Pass Wall is still in effect!”

...As he told me, that was correct.

If I looked carefully, Klaus ignored the rubbles that fell on him, and the spell cards only repelled the rubbles that were likely to hit Ann.

Accelerated gravel stones hit me and Klaus, but they all flew through us.

What a handy magic!

Edward-oniisama, thank you for preparing the immature scrolls!

The pit made by the collapse was deep and unexpectedly wide.

Although we should have fell down for quite some time, the bottom of the hole still couldn't be seen.

I thought that we would plunge into the gigantic Crevasse that was made in the bedrocks when we passed through the labyrinth.

But, on the walls of the surroundings, there were cavities to store the artificially made star crystal lamps.

It might be like a cathedral with a height of... several tens of meters, no, over 100 meters.

It would be safer to drop slowly and reach the bottom.

“Klaus-sama! The Wand of Feather Falling!”

“Oh, I understand.”

I instructed Klaus briefly while pulling out the same wand.

Coordinated the timing to swing the wand with Klaus, I also used the Feather Falling.

Beneath us, magic circles like white thin membranes were deployed.

When jumping into it, the magic circle crumbled and disappeared into a shape of a small feather.

Fluffy, a feeling like being wrapped in a soft air wall, and my body was being held gently against the gravity.

The falling speed became very gentle.

The broken stones and the remnants of the mechanism of the mechanical labyrinth overtook us.

After a while, the collapsed layer dropped to the bottom of the hole and the sound of a rumble in the ground was echoing.

“Ann-sama! Are you alright?”

“Y-yes! Erica-sama! Thanks to Onii-sama, there are no injuries!”

“Is Erica still alright?”

“Yes. Thank you for your patience.”

Klaus and Ann were reaching out their hands to reach me.

However, since we were more than five meters away from each other, they wouldn't reach me.

I took out a magical rope from the bag and ordered it.

"Stretch, like a snake! Tie, like a rope!"

Like a snake that jumped over to its prey, the rope shrunk once like a spring and then quickly jumped out.

Flying with a loose parabola form, the rope firmly wrapped around the arm of Klaus.

"You're really well prepared."

"Because I am an alchemist of Aurelia."

These were actually prepared by Onii-sama, though~.

When Klaus pulled the rope, I was drawn to his body.

With this, the three of us were finally be able to be together.

"What the heck was that? Was that a trap?"

"A trap... Rather than that, it may be caused by a malfunctioning trap."

"Malfunctioning?"

"Perhaps deep damages accumulated in the mechanism of the trap, the floor of the labyrinth, and the pillar itself, due to the battle of Onii-sama and his friends."

"Well, there certainly was a place where the broken gears are exposed, the mechanical labyrinth tried to work, but the labyrinth itself couldn't bear that movement."

Thinking about it, there were other strange things.

Dead bodies of those monsters were almost left untouched.

In the higher layer, there was a golem for material recovery wandering around.

Maybe because he was aware that if the mechanical labyrinth operated the layer might collapse, Onii-sama didn't install a golem in that layer.

But, Onii-sama... It was impossible to predict such a collapse accident with only that hint.

"Ah..."

"What is it, Ann?"

"No, somewhat, it's beautiful..."

The star crystals contained in the wall were shining pale blue in response to our magical powers.

In such fantastic sight, we connected our hands, and fell down slowly in a circle.

"Ann, you..."

"I'm sorry to say that at such a time."

"No. It's alright. I was just thinking about something similar."

That was true. Even if I care about it, I couldn't help it.

If I thought about it, it was a wonderful experience if I limited it to only the pit of these star crystals.

It sounded like a movie from Studio Ghibli².

If there was my star crystal necklace, it might become even more similar to that.

I was packing the star crystal lamp and hunting knife in my bag too!

...But I hoped there was no someone with a colonel position³.

Outside our anxiety and impression, the magic of Feather Falling gently brought us to the depth of the ruins.



After a while, we reached the bottom of the Ruins of Visitor.

The feeling of the structures and decorations was similar to the cathedral from the ancient times of Aurelia.

There was an arched entrance between the nave where we arrived at and the inner court.

On both sides of the arch, if it was a cathedral above the ground, there would be statues of the distinguished Duke of Aurelia of the past adorned, here there were statues of a legendary alchemist who was supposed to live in the era before we visited this continent.

However, the familiarity ended there, there were numerous differences with this cathedral in the labyrinth as deep as this.

First of all, the ceiling was a few hundred meters from the ruins that we had fallen from.

Naturally, there was no window.

On the wall of the side aisle where the windows should be, constellations which were imparted by the alchemist, which couldn't be seen on this land, were engraved.

Mythological figures such as monsters, animals, and tools for navigation.

They became reliefs, star crystals were embedded in the part corresponding to the stars, and they were shining pale blue.

Well, it seemed that the carcasses of the monsters from the labyrinth were scattered all around.

In addition to the carcasses, fragments of debris falling from the eighth layer were also scattered around.

It was a force majeure, but it was a scene that my ancestors were likely to get angry at.

When I had thought of such a thing, some of the magic circles that surrounded the

three of us turned into particles of light and disappeared.
I caught a glimpse of the silver pocket watch and checked.
It seemed that the effect of Pass Wall had expired.

“I’m glad that the collapse has subsided, if so many big rocks fall down, my Protective Circle might not be able to repel them.”

“This seems to be an important place for the people of Aurelia and I feel sorry if it was ruined by the falling rocks.”

“Yeah. It feels majestic. Erica, is this like a shrine?”

“Well, I guess that is probably the case...”

I looked around carefully.

In the inner palace of the cathedral – originally should be the place where the altar of St. Brendan was – there was a star crystal megalith instead.

There were several cracks running on the megalith due to the collapse just now.

I looked at it and tilted my head.

“*The God of the Visitor, the Altar of Bren’...*, it is supposed to be that...”

The materials were different, but this megalith was the altar of the worshiped god of Aurelia itself.

The altar of Aurelia’s founder Bren, or St. Brendan was decided as a megalith.

Originally in the West we worshiped the god named Bren, which was the god of voyage, star, and alchemy.

However, when consolidating with the other three countries on this continent, Aurelia also converted to the same religion in order to align the states with each other.

The religion of the Union Kingdom was a monotheism derived from the southern continent which was worshiped by Ignitia of the South.

The religion of Ignitia was tolerant to the god of other religions.

In this religion, as a part of the governance policy, we incorporate the gods of other people as angels and saints.

It might be a familiar way of thinking with the Japanese's Daikokuten which was derived from Shiva⁴.

Thus Aurelia's god Bren, which we still held faith today, became a saint, St. Brendan, and was serving the god of Ignitia.

(If it's the game setting, shouldn't there be a sealed ancient evil spirit? Although it seems as though the ancient gods are enshrined...)

If I looked closely, there were letters engraved on the star crystal megalith.

It was the letters of ancient Aurelia used in Aurelia-style scrolls and runestones.

In this way, I could barely read them myself as someone who was lacking in study.

“Crossing the ocean of the far away star, I will bury you here together with the long journey. Sleep peacefully, our no name friend. I hope that this abundant land will be your eternal cradle—”

When I read the poem that was engraved on the megalith, Klaus and Ann took a prayer stance.

“Not an altar, maybe it's a repository. For Aurelia's people who died before reaching this Ichthyes continent...”

“Somehow, it's a sad inscription.”

“That's right. But, I wonder why my ancestors buried this person with the same rites as a god...”

I touched the inscription on the megalith with my finger without a care.

Huh? Was it only my imagination?

The place where my finger touched carelessly became corrupted—

—From far away, I heard a voice.

The air of the cathedral was trembling.

Sounds like treble and bass, string-like instruments and brass instruments were played and heard.

It was a sad voice like the sounds of a child weeping, like a sound of a whale singing.

Every time the voice echoed, the star crystal megalith turned black from the inside and became corrupted.

The star crystal which was shining blue was now dyed in black.

From the cracks on its surface, black water was overflowing.

It looked like the megalith was shedding tears.

“Eh...?”

The moist wind breathing the scent of tidal, shook my hair.

In response to the magical power rising in the cathedral, the star crystals on the walls and ceiling strengthened their lights.

Somehow, the overflowing black water covered the whole floor of the cathedral.

The black wave washed my boots.

Klaus, Ann, and I were perplexed as we looked around us.

We all saw the spectacle that couldn't be seen at the bottom of the underground ruins.

There, the black sea which endlessly continued to the other side of the horizon, and the sky full of stars was spreading out.

¹ Magic of Alarm: Set an alarm against unwanted intrusion. Until the spell ends, an alarm will alert you whenever a tiny or larger creature touches or enters the warded area. You can also designate creatures that won't set off the alarm.

² In the raw it actually said ジオリ but I know it was referring to Studio Ghibli.

³ These three sentences are actually referring to the movie *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, a movie from Studio Ghibli. In the movie, Sheeta had an aetherium crystal necklace. And she was being chased by Colonel Muska for her necklace.

⁴ So, like the Japanese which incorporated Shiva as their own god, Daikokuten, the religion of Ignitia incorporated other countries' god as angels and saints. So, while in Aurelia Bren was a god, in the Union Kingdom he became St. Brendan, a saint.

Chapter 13

Megalithic Altar (1)

A sad song echoed from far away.

On the walls and ceiling, it was a galaxy of crystals that shone blue.

At our foot, the sea of black water that seeped out of the megalith was far exceeding the volume of the megalith.

The sound of waves, the scent of the tide, the moist winds, the homesickness were stealthily and smoothly entered my mind, trying to make the illusion that this was not the underground but the sea with starry sky.

They tried to make me feel the illusion that it was the nostalgic ocean of the Visitor's Clan.

I shook my head to shake off the delusions that had entered.

I had to be firm.

I had never travelled by a ship, and even before my incarnation I had not taken a boat ride for more than five hours in total.

So there was nothing like a nostalgic ocean!

“Klaus-sama! Ann-sama! It’s kind of dangerous, escape now...”

In retrospect, the Harvan siblings were struggling and suffering on the black sea.

Eh!? This had become a serious matter!?

“Sad, sad, sad... Aah, Onii-sama, Erica-sama... please help... my head...”

“Kuh... Keep your mind firmly, Ann...! Concentrate on the circulation of magical power, keep up your Magic Resist!”

Ann was trembling with a pale face while muttering incoherently.

Klaus hugged her, and protected themselves by wrapping themselves in the barrier of Protective Circle.

He pushed a magical recovery potion into Ann's mouth and forced her to drink it.

Klaus also drank a bottle of the potion, it seemed that he cast some spells and the barriers for defense were piling up.

"Both of you! Are you okay?"

"Erica, you weren't affected!?"

"Eh, yeah... Rather, I want you to tell me what happened..."

"Ah-... I see, Aurelia was dense against such magic."

Well, surely Aurelia was dense against a kind of magic.

Besides, I was dubbed by Oto-sama as someone particularly dense even among Aurelia's people.

Right now it was useful, so wasn't that good?

"I received a tremendously strong mental interference. It pushed back nostalgia and loneliness, and finally it seemed like it was going to capture my soul itself."

"I thought that my heart will be hijacked and I will disappear..."

"That was really dangerous."

"You're really dense... I didn't think the day would come when I would feel envious of Aurelia."

Somehow, it didn't feel like I was being praised.

Just to be sure, I moved inside Klaus' Protective Circle.

Looking towards the megalith, its changes were advancing further.

The lump of star crystals melted and became smaller as if it had been eroded over a long period of time.

The carcasses of the monsters that had been scattered around in the cathedral were also affected by the erosion by black water.

From the soft parts such as meat and internal organs, they were melted along with their skins, scales, and bones...

“Huh? Klaus-sama, if we are in this liquid as we are right now, aren’t we also in danger?”

“Don’t panic. It seems like a kind of magical effect that doesn’t work for intelligent creatures.”

“It would have been dangerous if my mind was destroyed with the mental interference ability just now.”

The Harvan’s siblings explained the information obtained by using Glam Sight.

Well, I was jealous of the Harvan people like this.

But, I felt like I understand it.

Originally, Ann should have encountered the collapse of the eighth layer alone.

Of course, she didn’t have the Wand of Feather Falling or even Klaus’ Protective Circle.

Ann would expend defense magic by consuming the majority of her magical power, but she also couldn’t completely prevent injury, and then she would arrive at the cathedral in that condition.

What awaited her was the destructive mental interference magic and black water that melted and took in what it touches.

If so, this water—

As if to affirm my answer, the black water that had spread throughout the room was beginning to move.

Before long it dissolved completely, the black water was gathering in the place where the star crystal megalith was, which had become the size of the little finger.

The black water raised while swirling and it condensed.

“Eeeh-? Well, after all, is this the evil spirit—!?”

“Evil spirit? Isn’t that the altar of a god? But, is there even a liquid evil spirit? Onii-

sama, Erica-sama?"

"I have never heard of it either. It is true that it's similar to a kind of spirit body – similar to the magical structure of a wraith..."

Oops. I said it out loud.

Anyways, a wraith, that was an even more ridiculous talk.

He should be the spirit of an alchemist who was killed by his compatriots because he made the Philosopher's Stone.

Then, wasn't that a ghost?

The mass of black water repeatedly expanded and contracted, and gradually formed a shape.

The body that was liquid changed, with hard scales covered the surface of its body.

Two twisted horns resembling a sheep or a goat.

Thick limbs that looked like logs with claws.

A large mountain-like body covered with shells and protrusions.

It was similar to a dragon.

It was similar to a turtle.

A monster that had never been seen nor heard before in the present world.

I wanted to say... I wanted to say even if I couldn't communicate it to anyone...

In that game where you trained monsters while trying to collect a lot of them, if you painted black the combination of Lapras and Sandslash, it will be like this¹.

—*GRRRAAAAHHH!!!*

The roar of the monster echoed in the cathedral.

The very loud voice that about to shatter our eardrums was enough to make our legs that were about to escape frozen in fear.

"What the heck is that!? You said it was an evil spirit, I can't judge whether that is alive or dead, but it's a dragon or another monster."

"It was supposed to be an evil spirit... He was the legendary alchemist named Zaratan who created the Philosopher's Stone, who led the Visitor's Clan to this continent and found the gold lodes."

"Why is such great man became an evil spirit?"

"That *was* a human – however, because he was betrayed by my ancestors, that grudge..."

A grudge?

I knew that if you had grudges you would become an evil spirit. But would it become such an appearance only because of a grudge?

I felt that the black monster looked at me, distorted its lips and laughed.

No, it wasn't my imagination.

The growls of the monster gradually changed to something akin to human voice.

[This me... this, me, a human? An alchemist? Kukukuku... everything is wrong... You...]

The monster's massive build was trembling.

Was he crazy?

—No, this time it was different.

He was angry. He was angry, trembling with excitement that couldn't be suppressed.

[Did you forget, Aurelia!

I always remember... There have never been any forgotten even after hundreds years of being frozen...!

Your smell and the pain you gave to me!!]

"Pain...? Then, after all, you are..."

[Oh, how nostalgic...

That face, that golden hair, those green eyes...

—But yet, you... about me... after just a few hundred years, did you forget!

This me!

...You guys killed, this me!!!]

My whole body was shocked as if it was struck by a hard object, my sight was instantly distorted.

The air was forcibly pushed out from my lungs, and I was confused due to my brain whose supply oxygen was cut off, as if I was dragged into the pool for playful attacks.

When I noticed it, I was pressed against the stone floor by the front leg of the black monstrous monster.

[Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha-!

This is just by stroking gently... this is how weak creature humans are!

It seems that this has not changed even after as long as hundreds of years has passed.]

“Guh... , tsu... , kah, haah...”

[Kukukukuku, don't worry, golden madness.

This degree won't kill you... I won't kill you, this easily...!

I will have you dead after letting you taste it... My pain, my regret, my loneliness, my, my...

I believed in you guys! I thought you were my true friends!

Well... well, you betrayed me!!]

Black droplets dribbled down from the empty eye sockets looking into me.

Oh, no doubt about it.

It was different from the legend and game settings, but he certainly was betrayed by Aurelia's ancestors.

[Remember...

Until the fire of your life disappears, just carve it in that soul... *Praise the devilish*

golden madness!

Zaratan is not my name.

As you are a human race, I am a race called Zaratan.

I am the only one Zaratan.

The rich Zaratan.

I am the one who lost the opportunity to carve my name in the future for eternity... by you, the Aurelia traitors!!!]

It was a monologue full of anger, yet full of suffering like tearing out himself.

I nodded a little while being caught.

The emotion of his grudge had gently entered my mind somehow, rather than the mental interference ability that appealed for nostalgia and sorrow.

The moment my heart shook, a small explosion broke out in front of me.

Because he was pressured by the impact, the restraint of Zaratan relaxed.

At that moment, something wrapped around my body and I was pulled with great power.

“I don’t know... I don’t know anything, Monster. Ignore us, and don’t make up a story without permission.”

Before the exit of the inner sanctum, there were the Harvan siblings.

Klaus set the Wand of Fire Bolt and pierced the black monster with his staff, while Ann was grasping the opposite of the magical rope wrapped around me.

That’s right, my bag... when I was pressed down by Zaratan, it was falling down.

“Erica-sama! Do you have an injury!?”

“Nn... I’m alright. Thank you for your help, Ann-sama, Klaus-sama.”

“I’m not okay.”

“Y-yes? What’s wrong, Klaus-sama?”

“If you die as you please, I’m not okay. Carve it deep into your soul more than the words

of that monster. Harvan's men will protect women in front of anything! So, don't make a gaze as if resigning yourself to such a thing!"

I had not. I had not made such an ominous gaze.

—I hadn't done it, right?

It didn't matter, and I was thankful that you would help me, but this was a tough one.

"Onii-sama... Be more honest..."

"Ann! Don't give unnecessary retort! Untie the rope as soon as possible!"

Ann untied the rope while sighing, and she returned my bag and wands to me.

Klaus' sister was having trouble with him.

I wanted you to live firmly.

Ann had a bunch of spell cards and a staff, she stood diagonally behind Klaus.

I also came to my senses and stood up, having the wand handed to me by Ann at the ready.

Too late, Zaratan had recovered his stance and was walking slowly towards us.

A burnt-like smell still remained in the air, but the monster's body didn't even show traces of flame injuries.

Was it been hindered by the hard scales or did he already regenerated?

[Nostalgic... I miss everything...]

I remember. The magic of a crafty alchemist.

I was surprised because it was a long time ago, but such magic tricks will never pass.]

"I see. If that's the case, next time you will be surprise by Harvan's exquisite skills. Don't think that you will have the opportunity to live and see my magic twice."

[Ha-! What a proud little boy!

You do not seem to be an Aurelia. The smell is different.

Were you lured by a small sum of money, or have you been misled by the girl's

charm-

It is not something I knew either way, but in the end you will be betrayed by Aurelia just like me.

I reject it. I have no grudge nor interest in you.]

“Are you going to retreat? Move aside, Monster. Sooner or later, if I don’t bring along this showy lady and my sister, you will receive a good scolding from my father who is 100 times more frightening than you.”

Klaus continued to look after us as he stood in an imposing stance, he dismissed the huge monster he was facing in a grand gesture.

Even though deep down he had to feel terribly frightened.

His strong point was his sense of responsibility, that didn’t change even when he was very young.

(But--)

I glanced fleetingly at the wand that was handed to me by Ann.

The stick head was rock salt. The shaft was cherry tree.

There was a skin of boar wrapped around the handle.

Core material... the leg of a pig which was preserved.

Yes, this was the Wand of Grease.

I believed that it was an instruction from Klaus, but... what did he want me to do with this wand?

The monster and Klaus were still glaring at each other in a tense atmosphere.

In this situation of conflict, my confusion was deepened.

¹ I don't think I need to say this, but this is referring to Pokemon. And seeing the cover of this series, Zaratan does seem like a combination of Lapras and Sandslash. Something like this but paint it black, all four legs have claws, and with empty eye sockets:

Chapter 14

Megalithic Altar (2)

Klaus raised a cry while heading for the ancient black monster Zaratan.

The lump of innumerable spell cards spread around him formed a huge arm that couldn't beat Zaratan's.

I remembered children's picture books. It was the same way that small fishes gathered together and formed a bigger body.

But could we compete with this?

Zaratan swung his forearm.

Klaus concentrated the spell cards in front of him like a shield and caught the thick forearm.

The moment when the claws of the monster touched it, a large magic circle was deployed from the spell cards which organized in order.

Something like a big spark was scattered between the two, and the magical residue fluttered in the air like scales.

Klaus was pushed back about two meters and he was on his knees.

He seemed to turn out unscathed somehow.

Oops, he looked over here with a triumphant look.

I understood that you were strong, but it was bad for my heart, so stop that.

"What are you doing, Erica! Use the wand!"

"Yes! Klaus-sama!"

Oops, he stopped giving me a triumphant look and started to glare.
Come to think of it, that's right.

Klaus had incorporated almost all of the spell cards into the expanded Protective Circle.

His means of attack now was only the Wand of Fire Bolt.

Besides, the leftover of that wand was about one shot left, right?

No matter how old he was, Klaus couldn't fight against an obviously strong monster on a one-on-one basis.

I glanced at Ann.

She seemed to be hiding in the shadow of the wall separating the main road leading to the altar and the inner sanctum.

I also copied Ann by jumping into the shadow of a pillar.

The battle between the mage Klaus and the huge monster Zaratan continued.

Klaus was the one on the defensive.

Sometimes, he attacked with magical power by putting the spell cards together.

However, there was not a single scar on the hard scales of the monster.

I thought he was amazing at averting it, but his magical power was not inexhaustible.
Besides, there was also a limit on the number of magical recovery potions.

(I have to cover Klaus...!)

But, Grease didn't cause damage.

I opened my bag for wands.

I didn't assume there would be such situation like a boss fight, so only few wands could be used for battle.

I should change the wands in my belt's wand holder.

Lightning Bolt.

Magic Missiles.

Hold.

Gust.

Castling.

Levitation.

Could the Klaus-directed Grease be used for battle for once?

While switching over, I noticed a wand that could be used as a trump card.

It was a Wand of Death.

The material was cypress. The stick head had twelve pyrope garnets.

The surface of the wand was brilliantly polished and engraved with words of the Aurelia-style condolences.

The core material was the final breath of a creature dying of natural cause wrapped in a linen cloth soaked into myrrh.

Only creatures that were smaller than the creature used as the core material of Wand of Death could be killed by it.

When it was used in a person-centered war, we used the last breath of a horse.

This wand was for exploring the labyrinth.

As we had to fight against beasts and monsters, it should use the last breath of big creatures.

Zaratan was about a little smaller than an elephant.

(The remaining charge is one. If the core material is an elephant or a whale this wand will win. If it is a bear or a tiger, let's give up and run away.)

Klaus deflected the claws of Zaratan and took several steps back.

At that timing, I jumped out of the shadow of the pillar.

“Over here, Monster!”

In response to my words, the monster stopped moving.

He looked at my figure and smiled with delight.

[A, A, A, A, A, Aurelia!!!]

The cry of deep grudge shook the air of the cathedral.

It should be frightening, but why was it comfortable for some reason.

The monster cut off his eyes completely from Klaus, turned towards me and put strength on his hind legs.

Targeting that moment, I swung the wand.

A dark, unobtrusive magic circle composed of crimson and black floated at the tip of the wand.

From there, ill-boding shadows that looked like three distorted hands stretched towards the huge monster.

The long black hands of death caressed him gently.

[I remember... I remember this magic, you cowardly dwarf!

Stupid child.

Bigger creature than this me, such being doesn't exist anywhere in this world!

I am this land... I carried you vagabond dwarfs crossed the ocean, *I am this city itself!*

...Formerly city sized!? Then even a whale was impossible!

The huge monster Zaratan kicked the ground and rushed at a speed that didn't match

his huge build.

I threw away the Wand of Death and pulled out the Wand of Hold.

(Not good! I will not make it!)

I instinctively curled myself and closed my eyes.

A crashing sound like a car colliding with thick walls of concrete shook my eardrums.

Klaus protected me and stood between me and the monster.

He added several hundreds of spell cards to the Protective Circle to take on the attack of Zaratan.

“Klaus-sama!”

“Erica! You, why did you attack... aah, no, was my explanation insufficient?”

“Eeh? I apologize, was that not good?”

“If you attack that beast, then my attack to distract him would be wasted, right?”

Did you manage aggro in a net game, Klaus?

A person with high defense would attract attacks and other people would give a degree of aid enough not to pose a threat.

So that was why you tried to get me to aid you with Grease.

But, if someone didn't make a decisive attack, then wouldn't Klaus who was attracting the aggro be in danger?

Because the one who could easily handle the high-level healing magic was the people of Lucanrant.

“I still have Hold and Lightning Bolt. It would be impossible to defeat him, but let's make a gap and run away.”

“I appreciate your thought but keep the offensive wands. The moment when

simultaneous attack is required, when that time comes..."

Zaratan's claws hit the Protective Circle.

The continuous attacks loosened the spell cards' solidarity, nearly half of them were bounced off.

From the rip of the Protective Circle, the smile of Zaratan could be seen.

[Ku, ku, ku, ku, have you finished the cheap play¹?]

"Erica! Grease!"

"Yes, Klaus-sama."

Klaus was holding down the monster using half of the spell cards.

In that moment, I pulled out the Wand of Grease.

Was Grease effective for this situation?

I only had to trust Klaus.

Shaking the Wand of Grease, white magic sphere was expanding from the stick head.

Magical power was transformed into a substance and expanded the magic sphere to the size of a basketball, giving form to a big bubble of grease.

"Hit it!"

I waved the wand and threw the grease bubble toward Zaratan.

The Grease flew slowly while fluctuating up and down.

When the grease bubble came close to the tip of his nose, Zaratan put on a bored expression.

It was avoided easily.

If our opponent was a human that wore an armor, generally speaking it would be impossible to hit the monster which jumped around as he pleases.

Klaus' Protective Circle of spell cards were blown off.

“Klaus-sama...!?”

Klaus rolled to the other side of the room as he was.

And, with slow gait as if enjoying the situation himself, Zaratan came closer to me.

“...Kuh!”

[It was a useless small workmanship, dwarf.

That's right, you are always, *always* nothing but tricks.

Everything is nostalgic... Even when I killed you.

That night when we reached this continent, to me who was exhausted and sleeping, *you guys*...!

Shameless golden madness! Even though I beat and killed countless number of offenders, *you still wanted the Philosopher's Stone that much!?*]

“Is it the Philosopher's Stone?”

The alchemists' of Aurelia family's wishes.

Turn base metal into gold – that was, a miracle stone that transformed everything into the desired substance.

In the game setting, the reason why the alchemist Zaratan was killed was to take away the Philosopher's Stone from him.

[Do you care about the Philosopher's Stone?

Indeed, you are also a descendant of Aurelia the Greedy. No wonder.

However, it is useless.

Those shallow thoughts of yours, *everything, is useless!*

The Philosopher's Stone, my soul itself—whether you rip open my belly, gouge my entrails, *you won't find it!*]

I understood.

It was an overly optimistic idea that I could break my death flag if I saved Ann. Zaratan – he would never forgive me or my family.

His hatred and grudge towards the people of Aurelia.

His death was a sin that all people of Aurelia owed.

As long as we, the alchemist citizen of Aurelia, sought out golden sacrament, that sin would keep on going.

[Throw away the wand, daughter of Aurelia.

I know all of your magic. You cannot kill me even if you dropped stars².

Well, what will you do?

You look like that girl who grew up with me.

If you are the only one, I am willing to give you mercy.

However... that is only if you betrayed the other two and kill them with your hands!

Like what your ancestors did to me!!]

The monster opened his big mouth widely that it seemed to be torn apart, baring off each of his sharp fangs in a grotesque smile.

“I will not do such a thing!!”

I raised a loud voice to the bad sensation.

What a pitch black fate trade.

[Isn't that riiiiiiiiight!?

You are just a liar who talks big, you said you will not kill other humans, huuuuuuuhhhh!?

So, this is my first choice.

The girl hiding theeeeere!

**If you left the daughter of Aurelia and ran away, I will save you and the boy!
Anyway this girl, just like her ancestors, she's just a cute low-life woman.
Either way, even if you abandon her, your heart won't feel pain, right?]**

Zaratan stretched out his hands with an exaggerated gesture like a stage actor and looked at Ann who was hiding.

That was such a low act, to give choices like that to a little girl.

I glared at the monster.

The monster accepted my enmity and looked like he was having fun from the bottom of his heart.

“Don’t seduce other people’s sister without permission.”

Along with Klaus’ voice, there was a sound of the wind blows.

Spell cards surrounded both knee joints of the monster, making threefold of rings.

It was a magic of Bind which fixed the target at one point of place.

Zaratan was bound by a threefold Bind, he fell forward as his feet was fixed in place.

“Anything you said, you have to defeat me first.”

[Brat, so you can still move. Don’t throw away the life that I generously overlooked.]

“Rather than throwing away my pride, I would rather throw away my life. I will not abandon those I had decided to protect.”

Klaus walked slowly, pouring magical power into the spell that formed Bind from his staff.

His clothes were torn in the middle, bruises and abrasion had formed.

He seemed to have wounds all over his body, but it was a relief that there was no haemorrhage or broken bones.

Klaus continued after spitting some saliva mixed with blood.

“...But this guy really has an intolerably gaudy face.”

That was an unnecessary comment.

I wondered if it was really a comment he had to say now.

Why did he even have to diss his face, this guy.

[It's useless, brat. You cannot penetrate my armor with your magic. It is the same with that Aurelia's Fire Bolt wand.]

“Don't underestimate the magic of Harvan, Monster.”

[No matter how different the blood flowing in each human is, everyone is equally stupid.]

Will you defend Aurelia three times and hinder my revenge?

Besides, you will probably fasten a constraint on me.

Please realize how charitable I was, *after I turn you into a second lump of meat that couldn't see!*]

Zaratan clenched his fists and roared with a terrible voice.

When he put strength into his whole body, the body that looks like steel or rock cracked, his large biceps distorted as if swelling out.

It was almost as though his armor couldn't bear the pressure from the inside.

Between the broken scales and shells, body fluids like black sea water oozed out and hardened again.

Repeating that, the monster expanded rapidly.

It seemed that he was trying to regain his original form.

Zaratan's legs became twice thicker than the Bind around his knee joints.

Even on the points where the Bind was constraining him, the spell cards themselves were gradually pushed back by the force from the inside.

The magic circle that formed the spell became distorted.

From the magic of Bind which had been torn away, magical power was leaking as fine particles of light.

“Klaus-sama, the Bind technique!”

“Although this is still too early... damn it! It can't be helped!”

Klaus manipulated the spell cards by swinging his staff to every direction.

Countless number of spell cards stuck to Zaratan's exterior like a shroud as if concealing him.

“If just Fire Bolt doesn't work, what about Fire Bolt with increased firepower using Grease!”

If I looked closely, something like oil was sticking on the spell cards that covered Zaratan.

Apparently Klaus seemed to have secretly used the spell cards to recover the Grease which was avoided before.

A magic of Fire Bolt was fired from the wand that Klaus held towards the grease-covered monster.

Flame spread in a fan shape at once and enveloped Zaratan.

The flammable grease burst into flames in a blink of an eye and a blazing column several times the height of Zaratan rose up.

The blistering flame illuminated the dark labyrinth just like daylight.

“...Did we do it?”

Deep laughter could be heard as if responding to Klaus' muttering.

[What, brat. Saying something with that kind of boldness, but it was only to *this* degree?]

With such pitiful fire, you cannot even kill bugs.]

With terrible momentum, Zaratan walked over here calmly while being covered in a blazing fire.

The Bind seemed already broken.

The monster spread his enlarged arms, and slowly brought his hands together in front of him.

Following the movements of his hands, the flames that were covering him were getting smaller as if being sucked in between his palms.

By the time Zaratan had completely brought his hands together, the flame had completely disappeared.

“Damn it! Bind him again...”

[I won't receive the same technique twiceeee!]

Zaratan shortened the distance between us step by step, while the spell cards were taking form of a battle formation before dispersing.

Somehow, his power was increasing in proportion to the enlargement of his body, to say nothing of his motivation.

It was obvious that the next blow might be too much for Klaus.

In order to prevent Zaratan, I used the Wand of Lightning Bolt.

The moment the Lightning Bolt shot from the wand penetrated Zaratan, a torrent of flame similar to Fire Bolt shot from the mouth of the monster.

Flames and lightning cancelled each other.

After the two magical effects cleared away, the uninjured Zaratan stood.

“Magic? Why...”

“What... his ability, perhaps...”

[It is no use noticing that now!]

Both of you, get crushed and dieeee!!!]

Klaus hurriedly tried to reinstate the Protective Circle, but it was unlikely to be in time.
I pulled out the Wand of Hold.

But, my hand that was wearing the alchemists' leather glove was blocked by the Wand of Lightning Bolt.

Again, this wouldn't make it in time.

On top of us, a huge arm that looked like a bunch of logs was raised overhead.

In front of me, the back of Klaus who was trying to spread his arms and protect me appeared suddenly.

—A beam of light crossed my field of vision.

The thin intense light cast from behind us hit Zaratan's left knee.

The thick monster scales break and penetrated to the other side.

After a moment, a pale flame exploded at the place where the hole was drilled by light, and the knee joint was exploding from the inside.

Zaratan who was trying to step into our space, lost one of his legs and broke his balance, fell on the spot and propped himself up with both hands.

“Onii-sama! Erica-sama! Please escape!”

“Ann, well done!”

Klaus pulled my hand and headed for the exit of the inner sanctum.

With her staff at ready, Ann who had sweats drenched her forehead was waiting there.

In exchange for us, a bottle was thrown by Ann and flew towards Zaratan.

That was, a bottle of Obscuring Mist.

The glass bottle hit the monster and broke down into pieces and spread a thick, milky white fog.

The fog thickened rapidly and covered the entire inner sanctum of the cathedral.

“Ann, you’re late. We were nearly dead.”

“I don’t even have the experience of combat training. Even if it was only that kind of attack, it was a good performance, wasn’t it?”

“I consumed too much magical power. A bit later and I would have died.”

“Mou! Onii-sama, please move your legs and not your mouth!”

I just didn’t understand the situation.

I listened to the Harvan’s siblings banter and ran with full power anyway.

Anyway, the siblings who seemed to get along well with each other to be able to banter were refreshing.

I was a single child in my past life and I had never fought with Edward-oniisama because we were past being chummy with each other.

“Onii-sama. At least give an explanation, was it not good?”

“Eeh!? You didn’t say anything to Ann-sama!?”

“Aah, my bad. But, I didn’t have time to do that...”

“Simply tell Erica-sama to escape would be enough! When Onii-sama faced that monster, I remembered that I felt conflicted.”

“Ann, so it was to that extent...”

“Rather, I was anxious because Klaus-sama was just like usual.”

“You guys, just what do you think about me.”

While running, Ann and I averted our eyes away from Klaus.

“Klaus-sama is... brimming with self-challenging spirit, an embodiment of self-confidence...”

“Onii-sama is courageous, courageous, and very courageous...”

“You guys...”

A roar resounded in the background.

Looking back, the bulkhead separating the inner court and the nave had collapsed.

A huge shadow appeared in ocher-colored haze mixed with dust and Obscuring Mist.

A monster popped out of the haze.

Zaratan who lost one leg was running with three legs with both arms on the ground, and launched his assault.

“That guy, he can move already!? Both of you, hurry up!”

We went through the nave and jumped into a narrow passage.

In no time, the passage trembled along with the sound of a collision.

Dust filled the narrow passage.

Zaratan’s body couldn’t pass through the entrance of the passage and seemed to have crashed into the wall.

Something huge had stretched from the fallen entrance.

Claws that looked like an execution axe brushed against the tip of my nose.

“Uwah!?”

“Erica, the back! Advance to the back!”

“Erica-sama, quickly go to the place where the monster’s arm wouldn’t reach!”

Klaus and Ann pulled me out of terror.

The claws of Zaratan were swinging in every direction before our eyes.

The monster was scratching the floor and the walls near the entrance of the passage many times over trying to seize us.

Zaratan who understood that we were out of reach were withdrawing his hand and looked into this passage by his eye alone.

With eyes like a hollow and dark cave.

[...Grudge... grudge, grudge, grudge, grudge, grudge, grudge, grudge, grudge,
grudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudge
rudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudgegrudge—

The cowardly Aurelia... Those damn kids who are standing by Aurelia...

Both are absolutely *unforgivable*.

I will slowly torture you to death, until you indeed *begging* for death...]

When Zaratan drew back after saying so, he began to destroyed the walls near the entrance of the passage with his claws.

The stones which were supposed to be hard, were gently scooped out as if they were made of styrofoam or something.

It was an amazing skill.

“Hii!?”

“Kyaaa!?”

"L-let's go! Talk later! Now let's just escape somehow!"

I thought that I would die this time.

I was thinking of stopping because of a series of shocking situations, but I continued to advance my feet in a hurried manner.

¹ 三文芝居 (sanmon shibai): a low-level play not worth enough to pay quarrel money. It is used as an expression pointing to behaviors such as behind-the-scenes behaviors.

² ‘Even if you dropped stars’ here referring to the Wand of Sailor’s Song, where it was said that it could drop stars in exchange for the user’s life.

About the alchemists’ leather gloves, if you don’t remember, Erica gave one to Klaus, so they both each wear one (not a pair, but one). It seems that the gloves are to alleviate the reaction from the wands. Up to this chapter, there is still no explanation about what kind of reaction the wands give to the user. But it seems that they couldn’t use wands with the hand that doesn’t wear the glove.

Edit: I changed Zarathan to Zaratan.

Chapter 15

Megalithic Altar (3)

As we escaped until a certain distance, the sound of destruction by Zaratan couldn't be heard anymore from behind us.

Turning from the branch point many times, it was a place that was of a considerable distance from the cathedral.

We were totally lost, but in the end there was no problem because we planned to escape with Pass Wall and Levitation.

...There was no problem, right?

“In short, we had to earn more time.”

After a little while of quietness, Klaus broke the ice and immediately got to the point.

“When a big monster is your opponent, in many cases you couldn't escape because of its legs' length and strength. No matter how stupid they seem to be, you cannot underestimate them.”

“He certainly was rushing at an extremely high speed, that's why we hurriedly created some distance from him...”

“Oh, yeah. It's dangerous to face that monster in a place where there is no shielding even if we have some distance.”

“That speed was unexpected since he was in the state where he lost one of his legs, Klaus-sama.”

The rush at that time was really scary.

I felt a sudden fear, I knew that my body had solidified.

“But, why did you let Ann-sama attack... you told me not to attack him.”

“That couldn’t be helped.”

“Because Erica-sama, concentrating magical powers is my special quality.”

Ann talked with her hand raised to her chest in a windshield style.

By the way, I heard that personal qualities were heavily involved with the mages of Harvan.

“Ann can release a magic of higher power than ordinary mages against the amount of magical power used.”

“It takes time to do so, and I’m not good at wide area magic.”

“Because she is also good at precision manipulation, she’s perfect for range attacks.”

“I see... You’re amazing even though you’re still very young, Ann-sama.”

His sister Ann was good at concentrating her magical power instead of using wide area magic.

It was a focused, high-density precision magic, so it could have penetrated Zaratan’s body which couldn’t be penetrated by Aurelia’s wands or Klaus’ spell cards.

“That’s why, usually I wouldn’t use large firepower magic like Scorching Ray, instead used beginner offensive magic, Onii-sama.”

“Isn’t it seriously better than shooting low-power magic and failed to penetrate the shell?”

“Huh? Then why didn’t Klaus-sama attack with Scorching Ray?”

Klaus was a man who would become a versatile mage.

Then, shouldn’t he be able to use any type of magic to some extent?

“My hands were full with keeping up the Protective Circle. I couldn’t take on the pressure of that monster’s power unless I expanded the spell cards to the maximum.”

“I see...”

“By the way, Onii-sama. Before long, the Protective Circle would dispel, right? Let’s hurry and use the Pass Wall to escape.”

“That’s right... There are things I’m concerned about. Both of you had seen it too, right? The ability of that monster.”

“Yes, Onii-sama.”

“Eh? What ability, Klaus-sama, Ann-sama?”

I had known about the monster’s character, but I didn’t know the details of his ability. What was it?

“You didn’t use the Glam Sight, huh. That said, the effect time of Glam Sight that I used from the wand was short.”

“Yes, during battle I didn’t have time to redo the Wand of Glam Sight.”

“Do you know that magic didn’t work on that monster?”

“Yes, I can deduce that much.”

“When the magic was erased, it seemed that his ability in controlling space slightly came into play. Since then I was suspicious, but when that monster blew fire, that suspicion turned into certainty when I saw that the Fire Bolt’s creator was Edward Aurelia.”

That flame, was a magic made by my older brother?

I thought that it certainly looked like Fire Bolt, but perhaps—

“Is it a monster that absorbs and reflects magic...?”

“Aah. I guess that’s the case.”

What a pesky ability.

It was hard enough that his defense was strong, and his power was strong, and now in addition that he was strong, magic didn’t work on him.

No, then, that attack after all was peculiar since it wasn’t absorbed.

“Why was Ann-sama’s Scorching Ray not reflected?”

“Probably because it isn’t an ability that activated automatically. He responds to attack

manually by absorbing and reflecting, so it was probably an effective surprise attack."

"It's the same as Aurelia's alchemists, huh. It seems to be a monster of ancient Aurelia."

That means, that kind of shooting wouldn't work for that monster the second time.

Based on the assumption that he would be shot, next time he would absorb the shooting magic itself.

Terrible.

"But Klaus-sama. So why did you postpone in using the Pass Wall?"

"The moment we touch that monster in the Pass Wall state, we may burn up and die."

"Eh...!?"

"That monster has absorbed one more Fire Bolt. In other words, there is a possibility that flames are burning inside of him."

I see, the inside was the same as the acid hydrogel golem.

After passing through the object that was saving the flames inside of him, we would definitely burn to death.

It was extremely dangerous.

"What should we do, Klaus-sama?"

"I will put up a Protective Circle and prevent contact with the monster. Meanwhile, Ann, you will cast the Pass Wall on everyone."

Klaus prevented contact with the monster, so that we wouldn't pass through the monster's body when we used the Pass Wall even in the unlikely event.

If we got to that point, we might not be able to successfully escape next time.

"...What about me?"

"Only mages can use the Harvan's scrolls."

"I'm sorry, Ann-sama, Klaus-sama..."

"N-no! Erica-sama doesn't need to apologize."

I was full of guilty feelings since I wasn't useful.

Was there anything that I can do?

"First, let's find a small room of reasonable size, or a corridor that leads to dead end. Because it's impossible to protect an entire area against that monster"

"But Onii-sama, if that monster approached us after turning back into his liquid form, doesn't that mean he could attack us from anywhere?"

"No, he seems to need a space of a certain size to create the outer shell. If I cast a Protective Circle that specialized to the opposing body throughout the room, he wouldn't be able to enter the room from the cracks between the stones."

Somehow the visual was kind of like a Japanese horror or a house with an evil spirit that would come out.

Speaking of which, this *was* the ruins where an evil spirit came out...

When I was proceeding alone in this ruins, I thought that ghosts were scary, but the fear I felt right now was completely different from that time.

The evil spirit was not the exaggerated type either, since it was a monster.

I seemed to be in a panic movie¹ right now.

"Anyway, why is it so detailed, have you grasped the power of Zaratan, Klaus-sama?"

"Huh? Onii-sama, you don't understand that much from the Glam Sight?"

"Oh, in fact, I tried to seal a part of that monster."

Klaus showed a bottle to us.

It was a bottle of magical recovery potion, but inside was a dubious-looking black liquid.

This, was this a part of that monster...?

"Klaus-sama, when did you get such things..."

“Onii-sama...”

“It was when Ann blew off the monster’s leg. The content of that monster have a composition similar to a wraith. I thought that the seal magic that works for a wraith would be effective.”

“You have that much free time, huh, Onii-sama...”

You had a considerable nerve to touch that thing, Klaus.

I didn’t want to touch it for a while. No, I didn’t want to ever touch it.

Even the bottle was a bit much.

“The shell of that monster seems to have been made by transforming the carcasses of the monsters that fell from the eighth layer. Seal didn’t work on the outer shell.”

“That’s why it’s only when he was in his liquid state that you can seal him in the bottle, huh.”

“That’s right. If we plan to seal him again, we need to destroy all of the outer shells once and for all. This information must be conveyed to the people of Aurelia.”

With Zaratan unleashed, not only us but other citizen of Aurelia would be attacked.

Even if we could escape from here safely, the battle would continue.

Especially the Duke of Aurelia, who was the lord, would fight at the forefront.

Ann glared at her older brother with sharp eyes.

“Hey, Onii-sama. What do you think about the reason why that monster could track us since forever?”

“Ah, that is...”

Did he sense where a part of him was and followed it with purpose?

Or it might be that the part was attracting the main body.

Because of how angry Zaratan was, I thought that it was strange that he would follow us forever even when he couldn’t see us.

“Onii-sama! Please hold it firmly! If it cracks it will be a catastrophe!”

“Erica... what should I do?”

“Why did you ask me! Please don’t pass it to me because it’s impossible!”

I was given the small bottle filled with the monster’s part and I truly thought that I should have never come to this Ruins of Visitor.



As I stood at a branch point, I shook the Wand of Mage Finger.

The invisible fingers grasped the bottle that sealed a part of Zaratan, floated and went to a dark passage smoothly.

Ann’s Alarm was also set on the bottle.

If the monster picked it up, the bell that she held would emit a sound.

“With this, if we move on to another passage, we will earn more time.”

“As expected your craftiness function well, Erica. Your mind and your face are an equal.”

This guy...

There were some things, do not despair.

“Oh my, I’m sorry that my mind and my face are bad.”

“N-no, it’s different Erica, what I mean was...”

“Onii-sama, Erica-sama, there is no meaning in earning time if we don’t get out of here quickly.”

Ann kicked off Klaus’ back and urged him forward.

I would like for the sister to train her older brother more.

“Even so, Onii-sama, Erica-sama, the sense of direction has become ambiguous.”

“It can be said even if there is little to no magical power consumption of the guidepost Cantrip², there is still the magical power trap in this layer. So yeah, I can’t use it frequently.”

Klaus and Ann’s complexions were dark with fatigue.

As expected, this ruins might be too harsh for mages.

“I am worried that we will go around and return to the monster. What should we do in that case, Klaus-sama?”

“...It’s alright. The passage is narrow. If that monster was approaching, you can tell by the sound of his claws digging the wall.”

“Before the monster came to us, he is supposed to go towards the bottle first. We are safe until the Alarm rings, Erica-sama.”

At that moment, there was a loud sound that seemed to make the ground trembled.

We stood up reflexively.

However, I immediately noticed it. This was not the sound of Zaratan digging.

Squeaking sound of gears, the sound of rubbing stones.

“This is the sound of the mechanical labyrinth, isn’t it? I thought it was that monster.”

“Ah.”

“That said, the mechanical labyrinth has not changed as usually it would, Erica-sama.”

The mechanical labyrinth kept moving even after we threw off Zaratan.

This mechanism was kind of annoying, so it sounded somewhat ominous.

At the end of the passage we saw something.

On the wall on the right side of the end of the passage, there was an entrance to a room closed with an iron door.

“I hope it’s a small room this time.”

“Let’s open it first, Onii-sama.”

Klaus opened the door, which seemed to be a large room.

Should we search again?

However, the last branch point was the place where I put the bottle for Zaratan to earn us time.

If we turned back, that strategy would be wasted.

I hope there was another entrance in this room.

Huh?

But as we entered the room, it seemed like another room I saw today.

“Wait! It’s bad here... Erica, Ann, get out of this room quick–”

I finally understood what Klaus said.

Decorative walls and pillars, countless of rubbles scattered around, ceiling which had crashed down.

This was the cathedral where Zaratan was sealed – we were on its side entrance.

At the moment we tried to retreat, something fell down before the entrance where we entered.

Black rigid scales, empty orbits like the abyss, sharp nails that could tear rocks easily like butter.

With his hind leg that was supposed to have been destroyed already regenerated, Zaratan in his full condition was there.

Did he climb the wall and ambush us?

Even though he had such a huge body, somehow he was really agile and shrewd.

[I am tired of waiting, humans.]

“What! No way, this must be a coincidence!”

[It is not a coincidence, I am the one who brought you here.

I used the mechanism of the changing labyrinth.

This is the place where my body was. I understand the construction most intimately.]

Looking at the direction shown by Zaratan, the walls and the others were destroyed, and there were places where the gears inside were exposed.

Did he directly interfere with the gears and manipulate our moving directions?

“Onii-sama, what about the scroll of Scorching Ray?”

“I don’t have another one. Before that, that monster would reflect whatever other magic we use.”

“Then, what should we do...”

“I don’t know..., we have come this far...”

After running away so far, we were now like cornered rats.

All of our escape paths were blocked for sure.

“Ann, Erica! His assault is dangerous! Disperse and hide in the shadow!”

Klaus scattered all his remaining spell cards and formed the Protective Circle to the maximum.

With little hesitation, he rushed towards the monster.

Ann and I dispersed in two directions and hid in the shadows of thick columns as he told us to.

However, as the huge monster sent Klaus flying with a blow, the air froze.

The monster’s arms had become even thicker, longer, and brutally distorted than how they were seen last time.

[I also got tired of playing with brats like you.

Well, how should I kill you?

Hey, Golden Madness!?

That's right, daughter of Aurelia.

First of all, let's kill people other than you, in front of you, for you.]

Zaratan declared with a voice full of pleasure while looking at me.

“What did you say!?”

[Fu, ha, ha, ha, ha, haaa... wonderful.

Your pain is my bliss!

Now, I will season your soul with deep despair and loneliness!

Your soul and your tempting flesh and blood offering, dedicate them to me!]

As he seemed happy, as if singing, the monster raised a shriek-like sound.

[First of all, the smallest, most innocent and the strongest among you.

Who gave me the deepest wound—

Your hope, I will cut it off!]

Zaratan crushed the pillar where Ann was hiding by swinging his two arms.

She was freezing from fear, but she was still trying to fight without giving up by shaking the staff towards the monster.

“Come, Monster! The one you’re really scared of is not Ann but me, right? If you want to kill my sister, fight me first!”

Klaus stood up with body full of wounds.

Along with the provocation, he attacked with spell cards, but Zaratan didn’t pay it any mind.

**[Kuhahahahaha! I can feel it, little girl!
The smell of your noble and strong soul!
Your soul seems to be great next to the daughter of Aurelia's!]**

The space in front of Zaratan became slightly distorted.
It was a magical phenomenon similar to spatial manipulation.
From there came something like a vast black shadow.

(He's going to unleash the magic that would take in Ann's body!)

More than that, what Zaratan chose was the magic of Death.
If he struck against the small Ann with this, it would certainly bring death.

“Stop it——!!”

“Kya!”

Was Ann going to be killed?

I had come so far, but couldn't escape from the fate of her death!
In my mind, the memories of Ann would be gone.

I didn't want that.
Did such thing have to happen?
Would such a small girl, who died before anyone else, forgive such unreasonableness?

At that moment, I moved.

Without thinking of the consequences, I waved the Wand of Castling³.

¹ Panic movie or a disaster film is a genre of movies depicting people who confront sudden abnormal situations such as disasters and catastrophes.

² Cantrip: is a category of spells that can be cast at will, without using magical power and without having to prepare in advance. Repeated practice has fixed the spells in the caster's mind and infused the caster with the magic needed to produce the effect over and over.

³ Wand of Castling: If you forget, this wand can trade the user's place with the target, just like a move in chess where the King was swapped with one of the Rook.

The magic of Death that Zaratan used was the one he absorbed from Erica's attack earlier in the previous chapter.

Chapter 16

Megalithic Altar (4)

Castling had succeeded.

I went to the coordinates where Ann was supposed to be, and Ann went to the coordinates where I was in.

We were swapped in a blink of an eye by the magic circle deployed beneath the feet of the two of us.

Before my eyes was Zaratan the vengeful huge beast.

From him, shadows that looked like countless number of black arms, just like grotesque-looking black flower petals, were stretching out.

It was an instant death curse which was absorbed from the Wand of Death and amplified using the power of the Philosopher's Stone.

Black arms surrounded me without any gaps, all of which were surely aiming at me. They couldn't be avoided.

At the corner of my eyes, I could see Klaus and Ann, who looked at me with sorrowful expressions.

The object of the resentment of Zaratan was merely the Visitor's Clan... and I was their descendant.

The Harvan siblings were unrelated to the monster's revenge.

So—

(Please escape. Please, even if it's only both of you, escape...)

There was no pain, no suffering.

The hands of the long black shadows touched me gently.

I closed my eyes and accepted it.

My body which lost its power slowly fell on my back.

Onii-sama, Oto-sama, please forgive me for dying before you.

Thank you for being kind to someone who said nonsensical things like me.

Erica went to Okaa-sama.

The eight years I had lived as Erica was a short but fulfilling life.

It was a precious experience that I could spend all my time freely.

If it was my precious life, I wouldn't be able to do it at all.

If I reincarnated again next time, I would like to be a pasture emperor penguin.

(...Huh? Maybe, I'm not dead yet?)

Unlike the Curse of Merciful Death, death by the magic of Death would be fulfilled promptly.

So, it was almost time... no, I should have lost my consciousness a long time ago.

Then why?

Besides, it was high time I struck the ground.

I opened my eyes.

I saw Erica Aurelia's trademark blonde vertical roll.

It was not a tightly rolled vertical roll that I always used to see, but it was a bit messy due to intense exercise.

Such a difference could be clearly seen.

Her hair remained stationary as if it had stood in the wind.

No, it wasn't just the hair.

The ribbon with plain color that had tied her hair was still dancing in the air.

There was also the Wand of Castling that I had let go.

Dust in the air as well.

The remains of the pillars where Zaratan had destroyed.

And also the monster Zaratan.

(Is this... my lantern lights¹?)

No, it wasn't.

It was not that everything stopped.

Only the ones around 4 to 5 meters in radius from me had stopped moving.

There couldn't be such lantern lights like this.

Outside the space where everything stopped, there were countless tiny objects circling at high speed while shining silver.

(Silver? Flying object? UFO... No, are those spell cards?)

Spell cards were flying over and formed a silver magic circle with a radius of 5 meters.

It seemed that those spell cards formed the barrier that slowed the speed of time.

But, it was strange.

Like the magic of spatial manipulation, the magic of time manipulation was located at the top.

Both Klaus and Ann shouldn't be able to use such magic.

Klaus who was standing upside down slowly walked toward this direction.

He came into the barrier carelessly.

Apparently, Klaus didn't seem to be affected by the time manipulation.

[Br,... brat..., yo, you... , bastard..., wh... what, did...]

"*Shut up.*"

A voice full of deep hatred interrupted Zaratan's words.

It was such an unfeeling and grave voice, I would never think it came from a 10-years-old boy.

"...How dare you."

As Klaus swung his arm, Zaratan was hit by something.

It was a sound like a heavy metal hammer striking a thick iron plate.

There was a small crack in the armor of the attacked monster.

"How dare you."

Once again, Klaus swung his arm.

This time I saw it.

Spell cards jumped out of the Protective Circle he made and hit Zaratan very hard.

The exterior of the monster that was attacked in the same place cracked, black liquid splashed from inside, and stopped still midair.

Klaus raised his face.

His facial expression was missing.

Cold, severe, rigid, expressionless face.

The eyes of Klaus, which looked like transparent sapphires, turned into a grayish color that seemed to suck everything.

From one of his eyes, a single drop of tear was flowing.

“How dare you.”

The spell cards hit the monster.

Again, a little part of Zaratan's body broke.

Even if the Protective Circle had a specialized effect on Zaratan, there was a limit.

Just which one of them had a faster acceleration as they clashed.

In this barrier to delay time, Zaratan had no technique to resist.

He could neither avoid nor protect himself.

Neither regeneration nor transformation took place on time.

Even if he wanted to absorb the attack, he didn't seem to be able to adjust the timing by the difference between his consciousness and his body.

Even if he could absorb the attack, it was a Protective Circle.

The magical spell that merely became a defensive magic was immediately destroyed by another spell.

“How dare you.”

Every time Klaus swung his arm, the armor of Zaratan broke, and black liquid that was his main body became exposed.

It was just a one-sided violence.

Although the spell card was only a small piece of paper by itself, the blows would crush the monster like a huge iron hammer.

Swung his arm. Crush.

Swung his arm. Crush.

Swung his arm. Crush.

Swung his arm. Crush.

Just like a machine, Klaus kept striking in a quiet fury.

Unexpectedly, he stopped all of the spell cards in the air.

Klaus raised his staff overhead and assumed a stance.

From his clear grey eyes, one more tear dropped.

I thought indiscretely that it was very beautiful.

“How dare you... , how *dare* you, killed... my friend...?”

With the end of his staff, he struck the stone floor.

With that as a signal, countless spell cards that formed the Protective Circle leap upon Zaratan all at once.

Klaus' magic looked like a silver tornado.

It was very beautiful in appearance, but it was a storm of destruction that crushed everything just by touching it.

Zaratan, who had already been disintegrated into pieces, was literally crushed until he couldn't keep his current shape.

Zaratan returned to black liquid, spell cards wrapped around him without any gap.

“I will never forgive you.”

The spell cards sphere gradually became smaller.

This time it emitted a rainbow-colored light, as if squeezing Zaratan inside.

Eventually, the spell cards sphere which contained Zaratan became about the size of a tennis ball.

Perhaps not just time manipulation magic but also spatial manipulation magic?

They said an inexperienced body and an unstable mind would hinder the eastern magic.

However, they also said that a strong emotion could amplify magical power enough to overturn that disadvantage.

Klaus took out an empty potion bottle and cast a spell as if singing.

The ancient monster, which was imprisoned with the spell cards, was sucked into the small bottle.

The lonely huge beast Zaratan would be sealed and fell asleep for the second time.

The spell of Seal that Klaus cast seemed like a sorrowful song to me.

“...Erica, I,... you.”

Klaus crouched down powerlessly when the sealing of the monster was over.

At the same time, the time that had stopped started to move.

I fell to the floor on my back.

Uu... , I rubbed my waist.

“It huuuuurts~~~~!!”

While screaming, I crawled in search of a flat floor.

Klaus flinched, trembling, and then slowly turned to my direction.

“Eh...?”

Oops, our eyes met.

I waved gently and smiled.

Expression returned to Klaus' face.

Somehow, was he angry?

No, surprise, glad, embarrassed...

Wrong. Angry.

As expected, he was very mad.

This was bad.

How do I get away from him?

While I was worrying about that, Ann came running and hugged me.

“Erica-sama! I’m glad, you are okay!”

“Yes... , it’s alright now, Ann-sama...”

Due to extreme tension, Ann’s cheeks were cold.

As I was stroking her back as gently as possible, Klaus was also coming up to my side.

He was still mad, but in front of Ann it seemed that he couldn’t say anything.

I felt like an aphid living together with ants.

If that was the case, I couldn’t let the Ladybug Klaus attack!¹²

When I was thinking of such rude things, Ann turned over with a bashful appearance, and separated from me.

Aah, Ann-sama, you could hug me a little longer!

Please protect me!

“You... , how come you are alive!”

“...How indeed?”

“If you are alive, then say that you are alive! You made me misunderstood!”

“Erica-sama was taken into the barrier of Onii-sama’s time manipulation, right?”

“Kuh...!”

“I live safely at great pains, so could you feel more pleased?”

Where did the mature-looking expression go?

Klaus was resembling a 10-years-old child, with his clenched fists trembling like that.

“Ha!? Klaus-sama, no way!”

“Wh-what?”

“Truthfully, do you dislike me being alive...?”

“Uwah..., Onii-sama... the lowest...”

“No! That’s not the case!”

No, no, I couldn’t thoughtlessly play around with this.

It seemed that I also felt embarrassed at expressing my gratitude obediently.

I couldn’t say it to other people.

“Klaus-sama.”

“What’s next!”

“Thank you for your help.”

“A, ah...”

“Also, thank you for being angry as a friend.”

Although I was a little late, I told Klaus my heartfelt appreciation.

Whether he felt irritated or embarrassed, I didn’t know him well enough to understand it, he turned his eyes away from me.

“Well, good... I, if you’re okay, that, that’s good... I’m, about you Erica...”

“Ah!”

“W-what is it suddenly!”

“What’s wrong, Erica-sama?”

“Maybe, the Curse of Death conflicted with the Onii-sama’s Curse of Merciful Death?”

That was the reason why I didn't die by the Curse of Death.
I was already destined to die in a few hours by the Curse of Merciful Death.
This contradicted the destiny of Death's immediate death.
As the result of conflicting destinies, the more powerfully made Merciful Death won.
Fortune and misfortune twisted like a rope, and the future of human beings was unpredictable, huh.

As expected, Onii-sama...

Not everyone could make such a powerful death trap.
I mean, this, could a serious practitioner even cancel this...?
A tinge of anxiety crossed my mind, but I pushed it back.

"You... Didn't you cast it aiming at that?"
"No, not at all. I completely forgot."
"If so, why?"
"...Why indeed?"
"Don't ask me..."
"Like this, I was swept by the mood, so I carelessly did it?"
"You! Don't throw away your life irresponsibly!"
"Klaus-oniisama! If you say more rude things toward Erica-sama, I will not forgive you!!"

For some reason Klaus and Ann fell into a sibling fight.
I quietly leave that circle so as not to irritate the two of them.
These two people were good friends in any way.

While thinking about such things about the other people's affairs, I enjoyed watching the exchange between the two of them.



The three of us could escape from the Ruins of Visitor safely.

In the end, it was a simple task to swing the Wand of Levitation in a Pass Wall state.

By the time we returned to Spring Palace, the date was about to change.

About four hours had passed since I entered the ruins.

It was much shorter than the perceived time.

It was the longest and most intense four hours I had ever felt, including the previous life.

Klaus cancelled the magic of Phantasmal Maze and we headed for our fathers.

“So there was something like that happened, Erica.”

Because I was worried about how far should I talk honestly, I only said that I caught the trap on the storage box that Edward-oniisama set up in the Ruins of Visitor.

There was no courage to say more than that, such as going to the lowest layer, released the seal of an ancient monster, not to mention that it was resealed with my life on the line.

“...I apologize, Oto-sama.”

Just apologize.

It was a Japanese negotiation style learned in my previous life.

When I showed that I was feeling remorse by keeping a low-profile, Klaus came in and cut the conversation as if defending me.

“That was my fault. I got her involved. Erica did nothing wrong.”

“Klaus-kun... thank you for protecting Erica. Did she go into that ruins and have returned unscathed because you guarded her?”

“No, that wasn’t it. Rather, I was—”

“Yes, that’s right, Oto-sama. Klaus-sama guarded me.”

I cut off Klaus’ words and said my piece to cover it.

The real reason was because the story got complicated, but it was true that I was thankful that he guarded me.

“I see... Klaus-kun, for me, Erica is a treasure that can’t be replaced by anything. As a father, as the Duke of Aurelia, I promise that I will pay you back.”

That being said, the Aurelia official himself bowed to a boy who was over thirty years his junior to express the highest respect for a nobility.

It seemed that Klaus still wanted to say something, but he didn’t persist.

My father let Klaus and Ann go back first.

The Harvan couple was waiting for them.

“Erica...”

“Yes.”

And my father said nothing more, just hugged me quietly and gently.

I felt guiltier than if I was being scolded for a long time.

When I treated myself roughly, I realized there was someone who would be sad.

After that, my father dispelled the Curse of Merciful Death without delay.



“Aah~~~~, I can finally sleep...”

It was two hours after my father finished the solution spell that I came home to Spring Palace.

During the ceremony of the solution spell, the worried Klaus came to check my situation many times.

Eventually, I was escorted to my bedroom.

He was a sincere person.

I threw the bag I borrowed from my older brother, took off my clothes and left them scatter around, and then laid on the bed.

No more.

I would not move another step.

I mean, I would not go into the labyrinth ever again.

To play in a dungeon, inside a game was enough.

As I was idling about, my hand hit something hard, it seemed that it rolled out from the pocket of the clothing I took off.

When we escaped from the labyrinth, I got it from Klaus.

“Oh, this is... , there is still some work to do.”

With vacant eyes, I headed to my working desk.

Searching the shelves containing alchemy materials in every corner, somehow I found the material that I was looking for.

I wondered if I could put the skills I already learned into practical use.

But, this, it seemed that this would take quite a while to finish.

...This might take all night.

I looked back to my bed with bitter eyes.

Oh, my beloved duvet...

Shaking off my reluctance, I tried to concentrate on the loot that I put on my working desk.

¹ Like a lantern light: This is an expression in Japan, expressing something like a shadow appearing in a lantern light, it is referring to the various visions appearing in mind when someone is about to die. The western equivalent would be ‘memories flashing before my eyes.’ So, Erica thought that what she saw was visions as she was about to die.

² Aphids are small sap-sucking insects. So-called dairy ants have a mutualistic relationship with aphids, tending them for their honeydew, and protecting them from predators. One of aphids’ predators is Ladybug. In this analogy, Erica is an aphid, Ann is an ant, and Klaus is a Ladybug.

Chapter 17

To the Promised Land

“Now, Klaus-sama, please hold this flower properly.”

I picked a faint thin pink rose with pruning shears.

I handed it to Klaus who turned into a bouquet-creation machine.

Klaus seemed to have been scolded by his parents last night, there were bags under his eyes.

He didn't suffer major injuries, but his whole body should be full of scrapes and abrasions.

There was also a large bandage plastered on his cheeks and forehead, which made him look like a boy from a manga.

Nevertheless, the spots where his skin wasn't ruined were youthful as was his privilege as a beautiful character.

Ah, my Erica the Marvelous Villain's body also didn't have rough skin.

It was appreciated by the plain fact that there wasn't any muscle pain even though usually I only exercised a little.

“Ufufu, Klaus-oniisama. Today you will listen to what I say, right?”

Today we were walking through the Knot Garden of Spring Palace as promised.

All of the gardeners were looking happily at Ann who seemed to be in high spirits.

Followed by me with the pruning shears, and Klaus who held a lot of flowers.

There was an impression about our group that Ann was a princess, while Klaus and I were her attendants.

Spring green eyes froze.

Klaus' eyes were also blinking rapidly. Ooh, comrade.

"Erica, did you stay up all night?"

"Yes, I was cleaning up a little... Klaus-sama, good work on enduring the scoldings."

"It's not 'good work.'"

Huh? Was he feeling tired?

I tried to think in Japanese, but in fact it was a conversation in this world's language.

Here the polite expressions were fuzzy, so there shouldn't be any regulation about that.

"...The preaching,... no, my father's teaching, it's not over yet. I just had a momentary break."

"Hii."

"After that, it seems to be my mother's turn..."

"Hii... Klaus-sama, please live."

It seemed to be a considerably strict family.

But, that was the Harvan couple way of showing their affection.

They were strict because they were worried inside out. Surely.

"There is a very beautiful rose over there!"

"I guess we have no choice. There are only two or three more."

"Onii-sama! If you don't reflect properly, I would like to let Otou-sama and Okaa-sama know..."

"Kuh...! Let's go, Erica! If we let her be, she will reap all the roses in this garden!"

"I won't do that!"

"Yes, yes. Ann-sama, you can cut as much as you like."

Klaus was reluctantly going along with his sister's selfishness, while his sister was

enjoying herself to the utmost uninhibitedly.

Above all, these siblings were good friends with each other.

(Aaah~~, at last, one of my death flags has completely broken... it was a tough death flag...)

I felt completely out of my mind.

The lack of sleep was also adding to that, I was just like a flower-picking machine with a fully automated garden commentary feature.

It was wonderful that I wouldn't die even if I was absentminded.

"Erica-oneesama, what is that yellow flower over there?"

"It is a wooden rose native to the southern part of the continent."

"Lovely! Erica-oneesama, I'm going to see it up close!"

"Yes, go ahead, Ann-sama."

Since last night, Ann had been calling me 'Onee-sama.'

What was it, this classic girly novel sensation.

I felt a bit happy, but I was pretty embarrassed by the compensation.

Could you let me replace the rosary?

Since there was no culture to wear a cross on this continent, as expected, it became the star crystal necklace? Sounds ominous.

"Good grief... , I don't know where she gets her inability to stay calm, that girl."

A lot of flowers chosen by Ann were held in both hands of Klaus.

Today's Ann was unforgiving towards her older brother because of the lingering excitement of yesterday's adventure.

I also dazedly cut the rose as Ann commanded and handed it over to Klaus.

With that synergy, suddenly he was holding a tremendous amount of roses.

Beside the massive amount of flowers that Klaus currently held, what was horrible was that the flowers that had been brought to Ann's room was about three times of those flowers.

It was not a joke or a hyperbole, she could truly reap all the flowers throughout the garden.

"She's exactly like Klaus-sama. She's very curious. Aah but, Klaus-sama lacks Ann-sama's courteousness."

"Oi, Erica... no, Lady Erica. Just now, what did you say?"

"Oh my, Klaus-sama. Please, have a look. It's a lovely large-flowered rose."

Slanders were more likely to carry to other people's ears, how troublesome.

While turning my eyes off him who was pouting, I cut out a diluted crimson rose that caught my eyes with pruning shears.

I adorned Klaus' hair with the cut out rose, glossing over his previous question while making fun of him.

Fuhaha. How was it? It was inevitable if both hands were blocked!

"Oh, it really suits you, Klaus-sama."

"Wait a minute! Stop that!"

Klaus' cheeks were dyed in shame.

This one was excellent!

In order to shake off the rose inserted in his hair, Klaus hurriedly shook his head.

However, it seemed that the thorns tangled well with his hair, and it didn't fall off easily.

I did it, that was fun! Rose-san good job!

"Oya, Klaus-kun, you're surprisingly pretty cute."

"Well! Edward-oniisama, welcome back!"

“Geh, Edward!?”

My older brother’s traveling clothes were the same as when he was about to leave, and in his hand he was holding a leather bag, which was the Wunderkammer.

Although it was a groomed appearance and a graceful conduct with no gap as usual, I could see a slight tiredness in his complexion.

Did Edward-oniisama stayed up all night?

“Damn...! Stop it! Don’t look at me like this!”

Klaus concealed his face with a bunch of roses.

His ears were bright red.

Anyway, that phrase, you’d better quit it somehow, Klaus.

“You don’t have to hide. Isn’t it pretty?”

“Guh... Remember this, Edward Aurelia! This shame, I will definitely get rid of it!”

Leaving behind a needlessly embarrassing parting remark, Klaus ran in the direction of Ann and escaped.

I wondered if it was that embarrassing to be seen by Onii-sama.

Maybe he had a one-sided rivalry with the alchemist Edward.

“Because the news reached me by owl delivery, I came home in a hurry, but... I’m sorry, Erica. Did you almost die because of the trap I set up?”

“No, I was able to dispel it safely, so it’s alright.”

Rather, I gave a lifetime of thanks to his super powerful death trap.

I couldn’t go to bed with my feet facing Onii-sama¹.

“Rather than that, I’m sorry I devastated your supplies for exploration.”

“It’s okay. I heard the story from father yesterday. To think that the leftover of my

supplies had helped my lovely little sister to survive. I'd rather be proud."

"Onii-sama..."

Onii-sama crouched down to look at me and gave a soft smile.

For a moment, I felt tears seeping out.

It was nice, to have an older brother.

However, with the next words, the angelic smile of Onii-sama changed instantaneously to a dark smile.

"Oh, but for the time being, please tell me later, as much as you remember about the details of who used it and how much they used it."

"...What are you going to do?"

"It's a secret. Erica doesn't need to be bothered by that, so please be relieved."

Klaus... Onii-sama seemed to charge a full payment for the wands and the potions.

What a salt to his injury. Misfortunes never came singly.

If my older brother's invoice arrived, I guessed he would be selling out some forest from the planned inheritance.

Let me plead to my older brother at least to repaid my life debt.

Anyway, after Klaus became Duke of Harvan, he should do his best in territory management and compensated for the deficit.

Even so, I was at a loss.

Whether it was alright to tell my family about what happened in the Ruins of Visitor.

That huge monster Zaratan could be a scandal of Aurelia of the West.

"I also went to the ruins secretly a few times, but I could hardly reach the place I wanted."

"What is the destination place?"

“My friend investigated through literatures, but in the deep part of that ruins, the remains of an unknown gigantic creature seem to be sealed.”

“O-oh..., is that so-. I don’t believe it-”

“In relation to the surrounding soil and the distribution of star crystals and the distribution of veins, with Ruins of Visitor as the center, even if it is a small estimation, it is likely that a diameter of at least 5 kilometers is formed on the base of the remains of that creature.”

“Hii... 5 kilometers, huh...?”

“It’s an impossible dream, isn’t it?”

I heard that it was formerly city sized, but to think that it was a creature that exceeded 5 kilometers in length.

Somehow, the imagination was too much.

It was good that the Zaratan we met was in his small form.

I didn’t feel like we had a winning chance at all if it was the original size Zaratan.

Ancient alchemists would be forced to use the Wand of Sailor’s Song and risked their lives on that last resort.

“That’s right. I don’t think you will go to the ruins anymore, but if you get lost for some reason, don’t go deeper than the seventh layer.”

“Uu... why is that?”

“A group of tough monsters were living in the eighth layer. The good thing is that they were barely wiped out, but if you used a few big magic, you would unfortunately deal a fatal damage to the labyrinth. Worst, the layer might collapse.”

“T-that is dangerous...”

“I was consulting with a collaborating researcher whether we should reinforce the labyrinth or dig a tunnel to repair it. Either way, since it is beyond the scope that can be investigated secretly from father, I must arrange a way to send an official investigation team through Leandez Magic Academy.”

The shrewd Onii-sama had to have secured a position in that investigation team.

I understood.

Oh, by the way, my stomach was feeling painful because I was feigning ignorance.

"That reminds me, yesterday, when we were inside, we heard a loud noise that felt like the ground was breaking downstairs."

"Ah, maybe it has collapsed already. Is digging a tunnel the right choice? Even so... what was the trigger, there should have been no mechanical linked with other layers... maybe I missed it..."

It was painful to be pointed out the inconsistencies more than this.

After all they were poor lies and the secret was getting ridiculous.

"By the way, Onii-sama! It's amazing that there was such a big creature!"

"Oya, are you also interested in the giant creature, Erica?"

Rather than interested, perhaps I should say that I had a bad experience with that creature himself.

"Alchemist Jaconius, commonly known as Zaratan, Erica also knew about that, right? There is a theory that the person called Zaratan was possibly the name of that gigantic creature."

"There are people in Leandez who noticed such a great thing, huh..."

"There are also other theories, such as that theory, the secret organization theory, and the alien theory, that it was an ancient super-energy generator facility with a built-in space control mechanism."

As one would expect, those were such outrageous theories, Onii-sama.

It seemed that he had a group of professional editor that loved outrageous conspiracy theories.

"Onii-sama, the giant creature theory..."

"Oh, there are several folklores that supports it."

Edward-oniisama was hesitating for a moment.

It was a gentle smile as ever, but a little bit of sad atmosphere had been weaved into it.

"Alchemist Jaconius, as what recorded in Aurelia's family's official history – there were differences between the story of the Philosopher's Stone and the solitary Zaratan, and the story that was circulated in the ancient Aurelia's family."

"I only knew the story of Zaratan that appeared in the fairy tale."

"Yes. Actually, it is a hidden legend that is conveyed to the dukes of Aurelia. In the legend of our family, Zaratan was killed by the magic that drops a star, but in the official history that Erica has yet to learn, in the end he was killed with a knife while he was sleeping."

I was surprised.

Certainly, that was what Zaratan himself had said. He was killed in the gap when he was exhausted and slept.

For Aurelia, killing Zaratan should be a taboo.

That truth became a small fragment and it remained in the present age.

"I have a friend who loved that story first. At first I was helping him, but before I noticed, I was completely absorbed in the story more than him... Our taciturn ancestors wanted to leave something for their distant descendants... somehow, isn't that kind of story fascinating?"

"Onii-sama, do you know what happened to Zaratan?"

"It is not perfect because the folklore was being scattered and ultimately lost, but–"

With that preliminary talk, Onii-sama started talking.

Our ancestors lived beyond the shining and distant seas of the stars.

But, due to a disaster or some other reason, they were driven out from their home land.

An ancient alchemist reported as Jaconius created one artificial organism at sea.

The name of the creature was Zaratan.

Zaratan grew to the size of a huge island after a long period of time, and carried our ancestors in place of an aging ship.

A city was built on the shell of Zaratan and the bones of Zaratan became precious ores, including star crystals and star steels.

After a long voyage, in which leadership had changed, they arrived at Ichthyes.

However, the alchemist who was the leader at that time killed Zaratan who was a meritorious creature and the person who was the son or daughter of Jaconius.

It was said that they did it to obtain the Philosopher's Stone which was thought to be hidden in the body of Zaratan.

But no matter how much they dissected the body of Zaratan, they couldn't find the Philosopher's Stone.

The alchemist opposed their own deeds and regretted their sins.

They buried the child of Jaconius carefully in the depths of the body of Zaratan.

The alchemists made a deep labyrinth that nobody could approach its deep, while still being a tomb.

Do not let anyone interfere with the sleep of Zaratan along with the child of Jaconius.

The youngest brother of Jaconius who survived and the daughter of the leader got married and became the new head of the Visitor's Clan.

That was the beginning of the Duchy of Aurelia.

"The alchemists seemed to have broken one contract when killing Zaratan, an artificial creature, but I don't know yet what that contract was."

"It's a sad story..."

"I don't know if everything was true, but I think that the truth is hidden somewhere in this story and it may be the role of us who are the descendants of Jaconius to unravel it... that's how it is."

Onii-sama smiled brightly to cheer me up.

"In my hypothesis, I think that they were not only buried, but they were enshrined as gods. I believe that the faith of the god² Bren was made by combining the clan of Jaconius and Zaratan."

"Zaratan, a god..."

"If the altar of Bren faith was found at that ruins, it will support my hypothesis... If the labyrinth collapsed, I wonder how many years it will take for a full-scale investigation..."

Ah, so it was like Sugawara no Michizane³ or Taira no Masakado⁴, huh.

Even though he bore grudges against humans, he had been made a god by humans, huh.

Betrayed, killed, and to appease him, worshiped—

I thought that I could empathize with him somehow.

Defined unreasonably, loved selfishly, unreasonably killed, wasn't that the same as me?

He was also a companion who was beaten by a blunt weapon.

Well, a crowbar couldn't compare to something like a meteor, though.

"By the way, Erica, that golem... made of star steel, huh? When did you make it?"

Oops!

I panicked and looked at my feet.

A large stuffed toy-sized, steel body, full-armor was sitting quietly.

When did he follow me to the garden!?

"Ah... that, yesterday, I reused Onii-sama's acid hydrogel golem's core..."

"Haha... I don't mind, since I can make as many acid hydrogel golem as I want."

"I will appreciate it if you say so."

“But, I thought that it was a golem made of star steel. Because it will deform to some extent with magical powers, it could do living organism’s natural movements.”

“Y-yes! That’s right!”

“It’s quite interesting—... Oya? Perhaps, this is a two-layer structure?”

“Hii! It’s a top secret technology that is still under experiment right now!”

“I see—, too bad... Oops, it’s already this time...”

I was already at my limit in glossing over the questions!

As I thought that, my older brother began to check his watch.

Y-yosh! I seemed to dodge the bullet!

“I will return to my room at once. Erica seemed to have completely devastated my supplies.”

“Uu.”

“Let’s talk about *that* necklace when you have calmed down. I found out something interesting about it. Then, later, Erica.”

That said, Edward-oniisama went back to his room.

When I looked at my feet, I could see the back of the star steel golem.

In truth, it was not a golem.

A certain someone was just wearing a small armor made of star steel.

“Why did you follow me?”

[I decided that I’m interested.]

“About what?”

[Why did you make use of me?]

“Pity, maybe?”

[I dislike compassion. You do not understand my feelings.]

“That’s true.”

[But, I also heard good things.]

“The story that Onii-sama just told us?”

[Aa.]

Tears were spilling from the black cavities.

[I was not betrayed by him. He was also killed.]

“Looks like it. It is a thorough folklore.”

[I—]

“Yes.”

[May I cry for him too?]

“Yes.”

Last night, after the ceremony of the solution spell, I was handed the bottle where Klaus sealed Zaratan.

‘*You can do whatever you want with it,*’ he had said.

So I immediately decided to take advantage of that and take up on his offer, and unsealed him.

“I think that your revenge is justifiable, and I want to fulfil the contract that my ancestors had with you.”

[Why is that?]

“Compassion, you don’t have to understand my feelings.”

The Zaratan that was unsealed got even smaller, due to the effect of space compression magic by Klaus.

An anomalous dragon with the size of a cat.

That was what he was now.

Black scales like a night sky. Two twisted horns like a ram.

Sharp saw-like fangs were lining in lines like those of a shark.

Short and sharp claws for all of his ten fingers.

The scales on his back were particularly thick and coalescing, and they looked like a shell.

Perhaps he was taking shape as his juvenile form, his head and forearms were large while his upper arms and tail were small.

The balance was exactly like a teddy bear.

He could be called a fish due to his scales and web-feet, and could be called a turtle due to his shell.

Called the Philosopher's Stone, called a god, called an evil spirit.

But in the end, they couldn't give him a name to call himself.

There was only one lonely anomalous black dragon in this world.

I made a small armor last night.

The material was the star steel which responded to magical power and changed its shape as much as we liked.

The spell was physically carved and built with an athame knife.

I was one of the few alchemists that couldn't build spells or charge magic.

And then I released his soul inside the armor.

One of the reasons was to disguise him as a golem.

The other was so that he could infinitely expand the cage of his body.

[...My revenge is over.]

"Is that okay?"

[I thought I killed you once.

At that time, my heart was filled with joy to the extent that nothing would matter.

You look like that guy.

I did not care about Aurelia.

I only care about killing him.

Only he was special to me.

Therefore, it is good. That guy has already gone.]

“The truth is, you wanted to kill him by using Alchemist’s Star in revenge, right?”

[...You understand well.]

The small black dragon who passed the age of over six hundred years laughed happily from the inside of the armor.

“If I can, I will carry out the contract in the behalf of my ancestors.”

[My wishes have not change even now... I wish for a friend, and then, I wish for a new name.]

“Is it okay with just that?”

[...That’s right.]

I bent over and touched the black dragon Zaratan’s clawed hand.

“Then, I will give you a new name—”

At that time, the beautiful and brave Harvan siblings came home with a lot of roses.
A refreshing wind blew through the flower-lined Spring Palace.

In this way, the curtain for my first adventure had fallen.



“Come, my friend, let’s give a new name to the Promised Land over this sea: Tír na nÓg⁵. ”

¹ Referring to the idiom ‘cannot sleep with my feet facing in his/her direction’: expressing that we are grateful for what that person has done for us. In Japan, showing our feet is an act of disrespect, so conversely, if you don’t show that person your feet, you are showing him/her respect.

² The god here is actually referring to an ancestor that was worshiped as a deity.

³ Sugawara no Michizane was a scholar, poet, and politician of the Heian Period of Japan. Today he is revered in Shinto as the god of learning, Tenman-Tenjin.

⁴ Taira no Masakado was a samurai in the Heian Period of Japan who led one of the largest insurgent forces in the period against the central government of Kyoto. He became a demigod to the locals who were impressed by his stand against the central government, while at the same time feeling the need to appease his malevolent spirit.

⁵ Tír na nÓg is the name of the Promised Land/The Land of the Dead in the Irish mythology and folklore.

Edit: So, in the folklore, Jaconius and Zaratan were the same person, but that wasn't true. In actuality, Jaconius was killed by Alchemist's Star while Zaratan was killed with a knife. That's what I inferred from reading between the lines, anyway. Zaratan was happy that his maker, Jaconius actually didn't betrayed him.

Edit 2: While in the raw it said 'Jaconius' (ヤコニウス), I think the author got her inspiration from Jasconius. In medieval bestiaries, there is a fabled sea creature called Aspidochelon, described as a vast sea turtle or a sea monster with huge spine on the ridge of its back. It was so huge it often got mistaken as an island. In Middle East, Aspidochelon was also called as Zaratan. And in Irish folklore, this creature was also called as Jasconius, which also mistaken as a vast island.

If you remember, in chapter 6, the command words that were engraved on the transfer gate was:

“Come, my friend, let's give a new name to the Promised Land over this sea.”

In this chapter, the words Promised Land has the readings of Tír na nÓg on top of them, and I tried to incorporate it like what is shown in this chapter.

If you don't get it, the new name for Zaratan that Erica gave is Tír na nÓg. But for later chapters, the author wrote it as Tirnanog.

Chapter 18

Klaus Harvan's Letter

Klaus Harvan's letter.

Dear Erica Aurelia,

A month has passed since we returned to Harvan's Gineda Castle.

Even now I still remember the case at the Spring Palace as if it was yesterday.

I finally settled down, so I decided to send a letter to you.

To tell the truth, I didn't think much about the visit to Aurelia at that time.

I think that I remembered that father and Duke Aurelia's conversation face to face was about mine development and forest resources.

However, you may not have noticed, but it seems that they were consulting about an engagement between you and me secretly behind the scenes.

When we were gathered together, our parents' arrangement about the political marriage had already took part.

I have never thought that I would get into a political marriage with you like this.

'The Aurelia's daughter would be a spoiled and an intolerable girl anyway.'

'Why should I be a couple with someone who is a showy, ill-natured girl?'

I was thinking about such prejudiced things.

But the truth is different.

You are much stronger than I am.

Strong...?

No, your merit cannot be measured by a strong-weak criterion.

You have been more than me...

I wonder what.

I cannot express it well.

The only thing that I can say is that it was the first time I saw a woman like you.

Well, let's get back to the story.

I was... At the bottom of that place, I couldn't do anything.

Even when I was stuck with being blocked by the traps of the labyrinth.

Even when my younger sister was likely to be killed by a strange monster.

It was you that saved us all the time.

You thanked me for it, but it is not so. It is the opposite.

It is I who is thankful.

Thank you for protecting my sister, Ann.

If I couldn't make it in time, I wouldn't be able to forgive myself for the rest of my life.

I want to be a person that balances you.

I am weak now.

So, someday I want to apply for an engagement with you if I gained enough strength to suit you.

Of course, if you don't like it, you may decide not to follow through with this engagement.

Remember.

You do not need to be mine, but remember that I am yours.

When something happens to you, I will rush to you earlier than anyone else.
And even if I have to throw my life away, I will protect you.

From your eternal shield, Klaus Harvan.



“Ann!!! Why are you reading other people’s letter without permission!? Give it back!!”
“This is not good, Klaus-oniisama! Absolutely not good!”

Before Klaus noticed it, Ann was drawing near and snatched away the letter he had just completed, and he became terribly flustered.

Ann completely disregarded her older brother who was becoming agitated.

Klaus was not good at dealing with his sister who was three years younger than him.

“Onii-sama. Why are you writing a sultry letter?

As soon as I take my eyes off, you immediately wrote incomprehensible things that was just an exercise in futility.”

“Who said it’s sultry!?”

“It’s definitely a declaration that you will become a yandere stalker anyway!

If she received this, Erica-oneesama will definitely become annoyed!!”

“What! What did you say!”

“Your feelings are too heavy!!”

“Before that, about the ‘yandere stalker’, I don’t understand the meaning!!”

He didn’t understand the meaning, but Klaus also knew that there were serious mistakes in his letter.

First of all, he had to listen properly to the argument of his foolish sister who was exasperated.

No matter what, because Ann was one of his few source of information about the Duke of Aurelia’s daughter.

“When I had a girl talk with Erica-oneesama...”

“Girl talk?”

Klaus didn't really understand the meaning of 'girl talk.'

Ann was starting to use odd words due to the influence of Erica Aurelia.

At present, it was only Ann that could grasp the meaning of those words.

When such a story came out, Klaus was obliged to follow his sister.

“I heard the type of Onee-sama's favorite gentleman.

That is, she has no favorite type, but there are the types she disliked.”

“...Then we can guess her preferences by elimination method.”

“That's right.”

“This is important information, please continue.”

“A man who shoved his feelings without permission.

Also, a man who at first glance seemingly favourable, but in fact he has no interest in communicating.”

“Certainly, that's a man with a bad quality.”

“Worst of all, she doesn't even want to breathe the same air with them, you know?”

“Kuh, doesn't even want to breathe the same air...!?”

“This is serious, you know?”

“This is serious...”

Klaus secretly recorded Ann's information as an important item in the memo pad of his heart.

These should be the profound reasons behind Erica's state.

If he conducted those acts unintentionally, there was a possibility that he would receive Erica's absolute refusal.

Klaus thought so, not knowing anything.

“After that, a man who suddenly hit her from behind, and she also refused any type of stabbing...”

“That... , isn’t that a matter of course?”

Klaus was ashamed.

What kind of experience did his fiancé candidate has when she was still an 8-years-old?

Was it an assassination?

Was it because of an experience that someone she knew was likely to be assassinated?

Was that why she sometimes has such gloomy eyes?

Klaus strongly set his will to '*I must protect them as well.*'

“There are many things that I don’t understand in this world...”

“Erica-oneesama is friendly to everyone at first glance, but in fact she hates a fierce man...”

No, there is even the likelihood of human dislikes.”

“Eh...?”

“Oh, Onii-sama is insensitive so you don’t understand.

Erica-oneesama has a smiling poker face, right?”

Klaus was further ashamed.

He recalled Erica’s figure when he was staying in Spring Palace.

Even without saying that he would be liked, he didn’t think about the possibility of being hated.

Because Erica smiled thinly all the time.

“It is a smile that everyone will accept gently, or rather it is a smile that doesn’t let anyone come near—.

No way, did you not think about that at all?”

“Kuh...”

“That it was a smile that absolutely doesn’t allow people to shrink their distance beyond a certain point?”

“That... that is...”

“Even when she was surrounded by a lot of people, did you notice that she sometimes turned her lonely sight towards far away?”

“...Ah, I noticed that.”

“Good! Just barely above the safe line, Klaus-oniisama!”

Rather than lonely eyes, they were dazed eyes.

It seemed like that to Klaus, but he refused to go against her.

No matter what he said to his sister when she was like this, he couldn't win with words.

Thinking about such a thing, Ann stared at Klaus with serious eyes.

The older brother drew his body back a little. Those were *really* serious eyes.

“As far as I concerned as a younger sister, it is nice for Erica-oneesama to become my sister-in-law.”

“O-ou...”

“Klaus-oniisama, you can work harder, right? You haven't gotten serious yet, have you?”

“Ou...”

“Let's forgive such a weak attitude for now.”

“Forgive, me?”

Why, do I have to be forgiven by you, Klaus trembled at the unreasonableness of this world.

“Yes, you're still fine now. Klaus-oniisama still has the advantage of time.”

“What are you fighting against?”

“What are you talking about! Seriously, Klaus-oniisama is the one that must take the initiative and fight!”

“Ou...”

For a moment, Klaus felt afraid of Ann's threatening attitude.

As expected women are difficult to deal with, he thought.

"In other words, what do you mean?"

"It's because Erica-oneesama is beautiful."

"Nn... well, that's right... that girl, is somewhat beautiful, I guess..."

"Haa!? Look into my eyes, and say that once again, please?"

"Aa, I thought that she is beautiful for a child... Stop it, I can see your eyes..."

Klaus lost his nerve and turned his eyes away.

Hidden behind her brother, Ann had a strange expression on her face.

"In a few years Erica-oneesama will surely become as gorgeous and bewitching as a large-flowered rose, she will become a peerless beautiful woman.

With that indecisive attitude, it will be too late by then, you know?

Do you understand, Klaus-oniisama?"

"What do you mean by 'too late'?"

"Onii-sama. Erica-oneesama will inherit the vast territory of her deceased mother when she reached adulthood.

Aurelia's abundant silver ore... What do you think will happen if there is a rare beauty there?"

"What's wrong with that?"

Even if she was an incomprehensible girl, there was an elegance to make her a wife after all.

It was Klaus who switched back with such a thing, but Ann's reaction to that was unexpected.

"It would be a property that exceeded excellent quality! It would be very popular! Full of rivals all over the continent!"

"Wh... what..."

"For example, Urus of Lucanrant, the Margrave of Harlan, will almost certainly aim for her."

"W-what...!? He's 26 years older than Erica, right!?"

The 34-years-old Urus of Lucanrant, the Margrave of Harlan was rumored to be reeking of blood.

Moreover, they said that he slaughtered the husbands of the female population of the fief to monopolize them.

Deliberately murdered his subordinates and such things as young girls of the fief by having everybody enclosing on them.

A maid who appeared in the service, who was found pregnant by the passing of the second month, regretted her circumstances and threw away her life.

Etc. etc.

In vague places where the boundary between law and humanity was ambiguous, plundering of women in barbarous degree by nobility was a normal business.

But, even so, Harlan was killing too much people.

"The infamous First Prince of Ignitia, His Highness Auguste-sama.

He is 10-years-old, the same age as Onii-sama. He might be the biggest competitor."

"What! That Auguste! That's unforgivable!"

Auguste, First Prince of Ignitia, was also a person who only had bad rumors surrounding him.

Born from the queen's unfaithfulness, he grew up without affection.

Because the blood of the royal family didn't flow, he wasn't blessed by the dragons which were the guardians of Ignitia and he was unable to ride on their backs.

He was doing improper conducts self-indulgently, exactly like a foolish ruler.

The bishops unanimously predicted that the age of darkness would come if he succeeded the throne.

However, concerning Prince Auguste, Ann didn't hear that there was a clear victim.

Ann was of the opinion that it wasn't good to believe such uncertain rumors.

Erica, who was notorious as a future wicked lady around here, also was a real example that rumors and the real thing were completely different.

However, if she considered it as a material to provoke her older brother, it was another thing.

Let's take advantage of uncertain rumors, Ann thought so.

There were many aristocrats who didn't want to get married, but Klaus' level of knowledge about evil deeds, this area was the limit.

"If His Highness Auguste-sama was her partner, she will never be happy even if she became a queen consort. Especially if she became a concubine."

"Concubine!? That Erica!?"

"But, His Highness Auguste-sama is the one who will be the king of the Union Kingdom.

In the unlikely event that Klaus-oniisama tried to save Erica-oneesama after the marriage was already decided, do you know what would happen?"

Klaus furrowed his eyebrows.

If that happened, it would be a crisis of civil war.

It had to be avoided.

Because the old royal family would never endure humiliation by their own vassal.

"But why are you familiar with the circumstances of aristocrats other than Harvan?"

"Because it's not an unrelated matter"

"How so?"

"If the political circumstances of Harvan became worse, I could also get married to the aforementioned Margrave or the First Prince."

"I will not allow that to happen."

"Onii-sama should never do that."

"Whatever happens, I will never allow that, especially you, do you have an ideal man—"

"Mou! Enough about me!"

Incidentally, even though she was tough to her older brother Klaus, her ideal type was her older brother.

She didn't want to marry a man who was as strong or stronger than her older brother.

So, in fact, it was Ann who had the most antipathy to this engagement talk.

However, at first she was also on the fence about the girl called Erica Aurelia.

It was when she was first guided along the rose garden of the Spring Palace.

At that time, Ann already determined the character of Erica and thought that maybe she could leave her older brother Klaus at the hand of this woman.

It shouldn't be necessary to explain that during their case in the deepest part of the Ruins of Visitor, that conjecture turned into certainty.

"As long as the relationship between Harvan and Aurelia is strengthened, my marriage will also be fine."

"Yes. Certainly, as far as you are concerned, this is not somebody else's problem."

"That's why, communicate properly with Erica-oneesama! In moderation! Please convey your favor to her!"

"O, ou..."

Klaus turned his eyes away from Ann's sharp gaze.

Originally oblivious to his own feelings, now Klaus' civilities were at rock bottom.

He didn't know how to process and arranged his true thoughts into what moderate sentences would be like.

"...You're making an embarrassed and unwilling look on your face."

"Uh."

"...You look like you find it difficult and troublesome."

"No. There is no such thing. Don't worry."

"Then, a little bit more mild and light, yet it is rewritten to ensure that Onii-sama's love is transmitted!"

“L-love!?”

“That’s not it?”

“N-no, absolutely, *absolutely*, that’s not it!!!”

“Aah mou! You’re so stubborn...!”

Ann’s scolding and Klaus’ scream echoed in the beautiful Harvan’s Gineda Castle.



It was around a month and a half since the case in the ruins.

A letter arrived at the place of the western duke’s daughter Erica Aurelia.

Written on a fine vellum paper, it was a letter from the eastern young noble Klaus Harvan.

[A letter from that black haired, good-looking dwarf?]

The source of that voice was the Zaratan – now the black dragon Tirnanog – who had completely adapted himself to Erica.

In the end, even if Tirnanog was to break free from the constraint of his armor, there was no particular problem.

Right now, we were just in the middle of bathing leisurely in the hot water set in the tub.

“Yes, that’s right. Gift from Ann-sama has also arrived.”

[Hou, is it an offering? As expected of the girl who had given me sufferings in a fight. That girl showed promise.]

“Offering...? I wonder if it is an offering, hmm. Well, perhaps.”

[Am I allowed to open them?]

“Yes, go ahead.”

When he received permission from Erica, Tirnanog finished up his bath.

And then, he started unpacking with a cheerful air.

[Ooh! Pig's thigh!]

"Wah~~..., a very top quality dry-cured ham. How nice~~..."

The ankle of the ham was wrapped with a label with an emblem of Duke Harvan.

It was a gem that was aged carefully.

Or rather, I thought it was very large and heavy.

The specialties of the East were the abundant of acorns from the forest, the fattened pigs, and calves that were brought up with tender white clovers.

Such information was coming up to Erica's mind.

[Can I eat it?]

"Yes. Ah, save a portion for me."

[Umu. I will. I never starve my friend.]

As a girl, was it okay for me to feel pleased with meat?

At first she hesitated, but Erica decided to banish her doubt immediately.

Anyway, people who produced meat were not bad people.

In the meantime, Tirnanog was sinking his teeth into the ham heartily.

"Well, let's take a look at the letter."

Erica opened the seal of the letter.

At first, Erica was looking at the paper with a loose smile, but gradually her expression clouded.

After reading, she stared into the air with a mysterious expression.

Tirnanog noticed it and raised his face from the ham.

[What's the matter?]

After holding her silence for a while with an expression that seemed to be suffering from a headache, Erica showed her letter to Tirnanog.

[*You are strong. I will become a man who will not lose to you.*’ Wait a minute, this is...]

“...What do you think?”

[A letter of challenge.]

“Oh, so it’s not just my imagination...”

[He is strong, but you can definitely win. I knew it.]

“No, it’s not that...”

Erica understood that she might have been regarded as a rival by the genius mage from the East.

She didn’t understand at all what went wrong.

This, perhaps, might be a new death flag.

She thought that she had made friends.

Or that she might have a decent friend of the opposite sex, for the first time in her life, including her previous life.

Erica Aurelia chewed her bottom lip slightly.

Her level of human distrust seemed to have risen again by one.

End of Arc 1



PtFF by: traktorA7EN